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Perceptions of Relationships Between School-Based Management, Program Quality and Student Achievement

by

Michael Bernard Myers ©

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Perceptions of Relationships Between School-Based Management, Program Quality and Student Achievement* submitted by Michael Bernard Myers in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Phyllis,
and to the memory of my father, Len.

ABSTRACT

Many claims are made for the burgeoning phenomenon of school-based management. In this study, perceptions held by principals and school district administrators of relationships between school-based management, the quality of educational programs and student achievement were examined.

Data were obtained, as a case study, through the administration of a questionnaire survey to all 21 principals in an Alberta school district. Content, derived from the literature, focused on influences and impacts of the phenomenon. A purposive sample of 10 principals and district administrators was administered a semistructured interview, and a document survey and analysis were undertaken.

Questionnaire content formed the basic structure by which the data from all sources were analyzed. Forty-eight findings emerged, from which a range of conclusions was reached.

Linkages between school, school district, and provincial policy statements about school-based management demonstrated a focus on the enhancement of student achievement as a process outcome. Principals and district administrators were cognizant of the focus. School-based management was exerting a positive influence on the quality of school programs. Such influence was not uniform, with the nature and degree of the causality unclear, although flexibility emerged as one important element. Better resource use, enhanced instructional policy and program initiatives, goal setting, accountability, and enhanced professional development also emerged as contributing elements.

Little evidence emerged of perceptions of causal linkaging between school-based management and student achievement, and reservations were held that such linkages would be established, thereby placing doubt on claims made in the literature. Perceptions emerged that the phenomenon was exerting a positive influence on principals' instructional leadership, notably in setting and monitoring school-wide academic standards.

Time constraints and tensions between managerial and pedagogical roles emerged as major influences on both program quality and student achievement enhancement.

The site-specific nature of school-based management and the relatively small size of the school district meant that no claims for generalizability were made for the study beyond the research site. Eight recommendations for practice and research in the district were made. These may be useful for schools and school districts contemplating school-based management.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

> School-based management is an idea whose time has come, and all we have to do to assist in the transition is to:
>
> - Clearly define what we mean by school-based management. This definition may vary from district to district.
> - Decide who is to have what degree of decision-making power in such areas as budget, personnel, curriculum and governance.
> - Smoothly make the transition from a top-down bureaucratic school district governance culture to one that provides an opportunity for much greater decision-making power at the level where the students are taught--in the school building. (Herman, 1991, p. v)

The perceptions of school principals and district administrators of the relationships between school-based management, the quality of educational programs and student achievement in an Alberta school district where school-based management has been implemented as district policy were examined in this study.

The concepts and processes of school-based management have moved, in a relatively short time, to a position of some prominence in the areas of school and school district governance. Alberta Education, the education administrative arm of the provincial government of Alberta, has stated as its policy on school-based management that "a school and its community shall have the authority and the support to make decisions which directly impact on the education of students and shall be accountable for the results" (1996, Policy 1.8.2). The Department of Education, Province of Nova Scotia (1993), has defined school-based management in the following terms,

> Site-based management is a process of governing that decentralizes decision making to the individual school. It moves the process of creating solutions from the board room and district office to personnel in the local school. Site-based management is based upon on the premise that the students, teachers, parents, administrators and citizens closest to and most affected by the outcomes of educational decisions are the people best qualified to develop and implement solutions to achieve desired results. (p. 3)

The statements of the provincial governments of Alberta and Nova Scotia encapsulated, in general terms, the broad philosophical underpinnings, educational rationales, and expectations of a movement which has gained impetus in many educational systems in different areas of the world in recent decades. The key elements underpinning this movement are that (a) decision-making which governs the directions of a school is best made at the school level by those with the closest investment in the decisions, (b) there will be an educational dividend flowing to the clients of the school, and (c) accountability for directions and outcomes will be placed at the level of the decision-making site.

A survey of the extensive school-based management literature indicated that there is a plethora of rhetoric presenting appealing arguments of a philosophical, political, social, or economic nature which give rise to the key elements propelling the school-based management movement. The literature survey also indicated a dearth of research which supports the broad contentions of much of the rhetoric, and clearly indicated that Herman's (1991) contentions demonstrated either a naive appreciation of the nature of school-based management, or a serious misunderstanding of the nature and pathology of change and the waves of reform, restructuring, and reorganization in schools and school districts in recent decades. This study focused particularly on the key element of school-based management theory, namely, that there is an educational dividend to schools and students through the enhancement of educational programs.

The literature also contained some evidence of research explorations of the perceptions of principals as to the impact and influence of school-based management on school improvement processes (e.g., Brown, 1990; Delaney, 1995). However, the research literature provided few significant insights into the perceptions of principals about the impact and influence of school-based management on the quality of the educational programs of schools, and on student achievement. This study, therefore, focused on the perceptions of principals of the impact and influence of school-based management on school level educational programs and student achievement, and on why such perceptions were held.

Closely linked to school-based management processes at the level of the school are their impact and influence on school districts. School-based management processes clearly imply a shift in the locus of decision-making from a centralized situation to the level of the local school (although overall district accountability has not and cannot be relinquished). Hence, the power to centrally manage, control, and direct educational programs at school level would appear to have been diminished. Oswald (1995) noted that "having delegated control over expenditure, curriculum, and personnel, district administrators now facilitate schools' actions by formulating and defining the district's general policies and educational objectives" (p. 12). However, the literature did not indicate that the perceptions of those who carry much of the overall systemic responsibility for the quality of educational programs and student achievement in schools, especially district superintendents, have been explored in any detail. Therefore, this study also examined the perceptions of school district administrators of the impact and influence of school-based management processes on the quality of educational programs and student achievement, and why such perceptions were held.

Purpose of the Study

School-based management has been implemented in many education systems, usually in the context of ongoing educational reorganization, restructuring, and reform. A range of positive outcomes is ascribed proleptically to school-based management, frequently before it is implemented, and commonly on the basis of less than robust evidence. Perceptions held by principals and school district administrators about relationships between school-based management, the quality of educational programs and student achievement in their schools and district were examined in the study, as well as factors which influenced such perceptions. By probing the perceptions of key personnel who hold specific implementational responsibilities in schools and at school district level, the study sought insights as to whether claims of enhancement of the quality of educational programs and student achievement were justifiable in the perceptions of such personnel in the particular school-based management implementational circumstances of an Alberta school district, and why such justification was being claimed.

Research Questions

In order to examine the efficacy of some of the claims made for the impact and influence of school-based management on program quality and student achievement, the following general and specific research questions guided this study.

General Research Question

This study addressed the following general research question:

What perceptions did principals and school district administrators in a school district of Alberta hold about relationships between school-based management, the quality of educational programs and student achievement, and why did they hold such perceptions?

Specific Research Questions

The study addressed the following specific research questions:

1. What perceptions were held by principals about relationships between school-based management, the quality of educational programs and student achievement in their schools?

2. What perceptions were held by school district administrators about relationships between school-based management, the quality of educational programs and student achievement in schools in their district?

3. What factors influenced the perceptions held by principals?

4. What factors influenced the perceptions held by school district administrators?

Justification for the Study

A survey of the literature about school-based management revealed that much of the content was characterized by rhetoric which was clearly ideological in flavor, confusion about terminology and about the nature, substance, and issues of school-based management philosophies and processes, and a general paucity of research evidence which examined its impact and influence on schools, educational programs, and students. Malen and Ogawa (1992), arguing for a much stronger knowledge base about school-based management, stated that "our review of literature on site-based management suggests that the tendency to rely on casual appraisal, anecdotal data and ideological appeal is pronounced" (p.204). Further, school-based management is not uniform in its terminology and application across schools, school districts, provinces, states and nations, and over time (Caldwell, 1990; David, 1995/1996). David observed that

> it has almost as many variants as there are places claiming to be "site-based." And they differ on every important dimension--who initiates it, who is involved, what they control, and whether they are accountable to an outside authority. Site-based management may be instituted by state law or by administrative action, by a district or by a school. It may be linked to an accountability system with consequences tied to student performance, or it may not be. Most variants of site-based management involve some sort of representative decision-making council at the school, which may share authority with the principal or be merely advisory. (p. 5)

In addition, forces of centralization, decentralization, and recentralization are frequently acting simultaneously on schools and school districts (Beare, Caldwell, & Milliken, 1989; Caldwell, 1977, 1990; Mintzberg, 1983). Caldwell (1977) considered that centralization and decentralization forces and tendencies acted in a state of interactive tension on a continuum, although some writers have claimed that the relationship is more complex than can be represented on a continuum (Lauglo & McLean, 1985; Mohrman & Wohlstetter, 1994; Swanson, 1989).

This picture is further confused by the fusion with, and intrusion of, related concepts from the school reform and school improvement movements, and by the rhetoric, conceptual frameworks, and known outcomes associated with them. Bimber (1993) noted that "SBM [school-based management] is too often viewed as a scheme that can be added to a menu of other reforms, rather than as a fundamental change in how decisions--all decisions--are made in a school system" (p. 36). While school reform and improvement processes and school-based management processes may be acting on schools and districts simultaneously, they are not necessarily interdependent. School-based management is but one approach which may be contributing to school reform and improvement. The distinction was not always recognized in the literature, and this appeared to be one confounding element to obtaining researched understandings of the educational benefits of school-based management (David, 1995/1996; Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990b). David concluded that

> although site-based management appears in many guises, at its core is the idea of participatory decision making at the school site. And despite all the variations in rationale, its main stated objective is to enhance student achievement. Participatory decision making and school improvement are presumed to be related, but that's not always the case. (p. 6)

Further, while many processes of school reform and improvement and school-based management frequently share the feature of the relocation of decision-making authority to schools, and the processes were widely perceived in the literature as important elements in enhancing school and system performance, David (1989) noted a significant difference between them,

> School-based management has a broader scope; it represents a change in how districts operate--how authority and responsibility are shared between the district and its schools. It not only changes roles and responsibilities within schools but has implications for how the central office is organized and the size and roles of its staff. (p. 49)

Hence, the study focused on school-based management and sought to filter intruding concepts and processes without considering school-based management in isolation, attempted to determine and understand linkages between school-based management, the quality of school educational programs and student achievement, and examined perceptions of principals and school district administrators in the contexts of their own sites and in the interrelationships between schools and district. In these ways, the study contributed to a clearer understanding of the nature of the impact and influence of school-based management on the quality of school educational programs, and on student achievement.

Genesis of the Study

The focus of the study had its origins in the experiences of the researcher in one school system in Australia. In that context, the researcher participated in and observed the movement of the system from the traditional Australian model of a large, centralized, and highly bureaucratized state-wide system to one where a considerable amount of responsibility had been devolved to schools, with school-site councils, including majority parent representation, specifically included in these processes. Although these devolutionary processes were not particularly predicated on the grounds of enhanced quality of school programs and enhanced student performance, there was an expectation that decisions made at each site, such as the allocation of resources, would be made with the uniqueness and particular needs of each site borne in mind.

These processes were, in general, a positive experience for the researcher. Doctoral studies at the University of Alberta provided an opportunity to examine aspects of these processes in some depth, and in a Canadian context.

Clearly, these experiences and interests raised the possibility of the presence of researcher bias being present in the research processes. This possibility was declared as a limitation to the study.

The Need for Research

The rapid diffusion of school-based management in schools and school systems, the theoretical claims made for it, and the confusing picture of impacts, influences, and outcomes have generated a need for researched understandings of the applied reality of school-based management. Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz (1990a) observed that

> most writings on site-based management are either project descriptions, status reports, or advocacy pieces. These sources tend to rest on the impression of a single individual and emphasize the exceptional cases, such as achievements attained in a small number of the most successful pilot schools. (p. 30)

Burlingame (1988) noted that "little work has directly examined the impact of political decisions about school organization on community support for schools, on life in schools, or on individual student achievement" (p. 442). Calls for further research appeared with some frequency in the literature (e.g., Cheung & Cheng, 1996; Malen, 1994), perhaps typified by Malen, "embracing broad notions of decentralization and participation as guiding principles of school governance and school improvement, SBM has commanded considerable public attention but has not received commensurate empirical inspection" (p. 249).

However, the literature also reflected some contention about the nature and focus of the research that is required. Kowalski (1994), for example, stated that "increasingly, scholarly inquiry relative to decentralized governance is likely to focus on outcomes. There is a pressing need to examine educational outcomes in all types of schools utilizing SBM. This includes scrutiny of both student performance and teacher effectiveness" (p. 205). Chubb (1990), however, was concerned that change processes be researched rather than there being a focus on production functions, as suggested by Kowalski. Estler (1988) also cautioned that "decision making is viewed as a process having many effects unrelated to outcomes rather than as a technology focused only on goal achievement" (p. 311). This study focused on aspects of change processes specific to a particular case of school-based management implementation, and did not specifically seek to consider the research questions through a particular focus on school production functions, although such data were considered when they were available and if they were relevant.

It is also possible that seeking detailed research data about the phenomenon of school-based management may be premature, as Quan Lee (1993) posited after completing a research investigation of its implementation in the Los Angeles Unified School District,

> It appears from previous research that SDM [shared decision making] is still too young to determine its overall effectiveness in schools. Longitudinal studies on the academic achievement of students, school operations, quality of instruction, the perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators, and interpersonal relations of all employees between all levels must continue to be conducted in order to determine the effectiveness of SDM or SBM as a means for school reform. (p. 43)

Contribution to Knowledge and Practice

The general dearth of research knowledge about emerging patterns of impact and influence of school-based management in relation to the theoretical claims made for it, and the confused picture of outcomes and effects which is presented in the research that has been undertaken, contribute to a knowledge base about school-based management which is uncertain, thereby making rational, balanced judgements about the efficacy of the claims made for school-based management somewhat problematic. While no claims of generalizability are made for the outcomes of the study because of the site-specific nature of school-based management generally, and because of the case study approach to research applied in one school district only, understandings were reached about the implementation of school-based management as the phenomenon affects, or has little or no effect on, the quality of school programs and student achievement. Such knowledge may facilitate further understanding and reappraisal of the theory of school-based management, and the ramifications for practice of this particular school and school district restructuring artifact. Some implications of the study for school-based management theory, policy, and practice are briefly examined in the following section.

Implications for Theory, Policy, and Practice

Theory

Eichenberger (1989) has observed that "the relationship between empirical research results and theory is difficult to discern precisely" (p. 267). The review of the literature about school-based management, and the outcomes of this study, amply demonstrated the accuracy of Eichenberger's perception.

The contemporary rise to prominence of the phenomenon of school-based management is a result of complex interactions of an array of factors and influences. Outcomes are, at this time, patently ephemeral, and there is little coherency to them. There are indications in the literature that this fact, and the theoretical advantages which have been claimed for school-based management, are beginning to cause doubt to be thrown on both the efficacy and the theoretical edifices upon which the phenomenon has been constructed. However, several writers (e.g., Bimber, 1994; David, 1995/96) have cautioned against a rush to judgement. Bimber commented that "it would be premature to judge the validity of decentralization's chief assumption, as some are beginning to do, until we have a better empirical understanding of the nature of governance changes that decentralization efforts bring about" (p. viii).

This study's exploration of the perceptions of a key assumption of the theory of school-based management, the enhancement of the quality of school programs and of student achievement, and the conclusions reached that perceptions existed that school-based management was exerting some influence on the quality of programs, but not on student achievement, help inform the theoretical basis of school-based management. Further, as a component of a growing pool of knowledge, these explorations and conclusions may facilitate the reshaping of the underpinning perspectives, as the nature of the changes noted by Bimber assume more distinct form.

Policy

Defining the relationship between research and policy appears to be just as problematic as defining that between theory and research. Rist (1994) noted that "policy making is multidimensional and multifaceted. Research is but one (and often minor at that) among the number of frequently contradictory and competing sources that seek to influence what is an ongoing and constantly evolving process" (p. 546). However, it has also been noted that "research provides tentative knowledge that may be informative, advisory, and problematising in terms of the issues faced by policy-makers, administrators, as well as practitioners" (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 1995, p. 30). In Holdaway's (1986) view, these functions are possibly enhanced if they are not considered in isolation. Citing Adams, Smelser, and Treiman (1982), he noted that

> the power of basic research to improve and enrich our lives grows out of the mutual reinforcement and synergism of many interlocking ideas, findings, and practical outcomes. It cannot be understood and properly utilized if we concentrate instead on isolated product-centered outcomes. (p. 255)

This study provided some tentative knowledge that could benefit both the development of policy and the reappraisal of existing policy in respect of school-based management. Although the researcher has been steadfast in not claiming generalizability for the study's outcomes beyond the research site, it does contribute to an accumulation of knowledge and experience which could provide perspectives in policy development and reappraisal processes. It could also be of value to schools, school districts, and others such as provincial organizations, in gaining understandings of the implementational facets of school-based management policies, as they have been demonstrated in one school district.

Practice

The characteristic of school-based management that, in practice, it is specific to schools and school districts and that, in terms of practice, it will be shaped by and in turn shape the site-specific nature of each school and district, means that care needs to be exercised in attempting to translate practice among district and school sites. Notwithstanding, such specificity is not so exclusive that the study cannot be granted some potential contribution to practice.

Eichenberger (1989) commented that "with the realization that we cannot know the exact truth about anything should come the understanding that *all* relevant knowledge for making the 'right' decision is seldom, if ever, available" (p. 272, author's emphasis). The truth about school-based management in practice is far from being known and understood. This is a common problem for, as Fullan (1991) noted, "neglect of the phenomenology of change--that is, how people actually experience change as distinct from how it might have been intended--is at the heart of the spectacular lack of success of most social reforms" (p. 4). This study, in its examination of school-based management implementation in one school district, and of its early influence on school sites, may provide insights in some specific areas which have the potential to inform practice, especially in the areas of pre-implementation preparation, professional development, and school and school district interrelationships in a school-based management context, and may contribute to a knowledge base which is beginning to challenge the assumption of a directly articulated relationship between the practices of school-based management, the enhancement of the quality of school programs, and student achievement.

Definitions

Definitional analyses of key terms used to guide the study are undertaken in this section.

School-based management. The concept of school-based management does not lend itself readily to definitional clarity. The nature of the concept is confused and contested, and may vary from site to site. There is intrusion from other facets of school reform, restructuring, and improvement movements and their associated concepts and practices. Variations in definitions may be indicative of underlying political, social, economic, or philosophical confusion or turbulence. Consequently, a process of examining and critiquing of definitions is undertaken in Chapter 2. In broad terms, school-based management refers to a process of governance adjustment whereby decision-making authority is relocated from a central authority such as a school district to individual schools. Ideally, the relocated authority empowers schools to make decisions which influence, in positive ways, the core tasks of schools, the education of students, and which facilitates shared decision-making processes by site participants such as staff and parents.

Perceptions. An understanding of the nature and importance of perceptions assumed some importance in this study. Johnson (1987) observed that

> perceptions shape human attitudes and behavior; their impact is pervasive and unavoidable. They provide bases for understanding reality--objects, events, and the people with whom we interact--and our responses to them. Thus perceptions dominate all the situations that educational and other social researchers study. (p. 206)

However, Johnson also noted that "the notion of perceptions has resisted clear and conclusive definition" (p. 207). For example, Shafritz, Koeppe, and Soper (1988) defined perception as "the way in which a person views his or her environment based on the senses, past experience, attitudes, current information, and other personal variables" (p. 347). Page and Thomas (1977) also noted that "we restructure our environment through perceptual processes" (p. 261). However, these are more descriptions of perceptual processes than definitions. In attempting to develop insights into the nature of perceptions, Johnson, citing Allport (1955), posited a series of major generalizations about perception theories. These were that (a) multiple understandings of events are aggregated and interrelated by individuals and are organized within limiting perceptual boundaries; (b) perceptions are constructed over time and remain relatively constant with general order and stability prevailing, although inconsistencies can be present; (c) following disruptions from new impressions, there is a tendency to return to original perceptual constructs; (d) impressions are not weighted equally in aggregations; and (e) although aggregations may sometimes conflict, usually they mutually support higher-order perceptual generalizations.

Further understandings of the nature of perceptions have been enhanced by the focus in recent decades in the field of social psychology on the nature of attribution theory (Dalal, 1988; Hewstone, 1989; Frasher & Frasher, 1981; Pepitone, 1986). Pepitone defined attribution theory in functional terms,

> The basis issue of attribution theory--how do people infer the "causes" of their own behavior and that of others--identifies the field as cognitive social psychology in that it concerns the process of knowing. It may also be said that the issue rests on an implicit premise that people have a need to know and to understand; and to control the outcomes important for them by being able to explain and predict. (p. 247)

Several writers believed that attribution theory offers strong possibilities for exploring the nature of perceptions in educational research contexts, but that such possibilities were not being pursued (Frasher & Frasher, 1981; Johnson, 1987). Although there is some research evidence of attribution theory being used to research aspects of organizational and administrative behavior in educational contexts (e.g., Martenko & Gardner, 1987; Misra, 1988), the observations made by Johnson and Frasher and Frasher remain essentially true, for no apparent reason other than perhaps interdisciplinary myopia.

In sum, the framework of generalizations provided by Johnson engenders sufficient insights into the nature of perceptions for the purposes of this study, providing Johnson's warning that "objective reality can be known only through the filter of perceptions" (p. 207) is borne in mind.

Quality. Blake and Hanley (1995) have noted that "the idea of quality is elusive since what appears to some as high-quality educational provisions may not bring universal approbation" (p. 134). Such definitional elusiveness was also noted by Adams (1993), and Smith and Lusthaus (1995). Further, it reflects a serious and ongoing philosophical debate in the literature which is focused on the purposes of education, and considers such contentious matters as the relative importance of measurable and non-measurable goals and outcomes (e.g., Adams, 1993; Blake & Hanley, 1995; Harrison, 1994; Hopkins, 1987; Roxburgh, 1996; Smith & Lusthaus, 1995).

The contentions of Adams (1993) that educational quality has multiple definitions would appear to offer an approach to overcoming this definitional conundrum. Adams noted prevailing perspectives about the nature of quality in education, and considered that they were (a) quality as reputation, (b) quality as resources and inputs, (c) quality as process, (d) quality as content, (e) quality as outputs and outcomes, and (f) quality as "value added" (p. 5).

In exploring these perspectives, Adams concluded that the characteristics of the varying definitions of educational quality were (a) quality has multiple meanings and is frequently multidimensional; (b) individual values and interpretations may be reflected in meanings of quality and such meanings of quality are grounded in values, cultures, and traditions, and may be specific to particular societal, cultural, geographic, and personal milieux; (c) different stakeholders may hold differing interpretations of quality; (d) quality is dynamic, possibly changing over time and across contexts; and (e) qualitative and quantitative approaches may be used to assess quality.

Adams also developed constructs about which contextual understandings of quality may be clustered. These were that (a) quality is definable in context;

(b) objective measurement is possible under some assumptions; (c) interpretations of efficiency and equity often supplement, complement, or are integrated with conceptions of quality, and there is not necessarily a linkage between quality and high costs; (d) quality can be evaluated across educational settings provided similar missions and goals and comparable contexts are present; and (e) while consensus on definitional understandings of quality may be difficult to achieve, there is usually consistency in agreement that it is an appropriate aim for educational settings.

Dimmock (1990) contended that, in influencing the quality of education, the standards of teaching and teachers' performance, the standards of learning and students' performance, and a more balanced (containing few knowledge gaps) and relevant (meeting the needs of clients) curriculum, also need to be influenced both singularly and collectively.

In view of the parochial specificity associated with the theory and practice of school-based management, the constructs of Adams and Dimmock provided appropriate definitional clarity and boundaries for the purposes of this study.

Student achievement. Good (1973) has described achievement as "accomplishment or proficiency of performance in a given skill or body of knowledge" (p. 7), and achievement by a pupil as "the status of a pupil with respect to attained skills or knowledge as compared with other pupils or with the school's adopted standards" (p. 7). However, Wehlage, Newmann, and Secada (1996) challenged traditional conceptions such as these, claiming that "the kind of achievement required for students to earn school credits, grades, and high scores on tests is often considered trivial, contrived, and meaningless" (p. 23). They suggested a concept of *authentic achievement.* They use the term authentic in the sense that it means "real, genuine, or true rather than artificial, fake, or misleading" (p. 22). Their conception of such achievement consisted of (a) construction of knowledge, by which knowledge is constructed and produced as well as reproduced; (b) disciplined inquiry, which includes using prior knowledge, seeking in-depth rather than superficial understanding, and expression through elaborated communication; and (c) the value of achievement beyond school, which "reflects aesthetic, utilitarian or personal value" (p. 26). The perspectives of Wehlage et al. reflected more contemporary philosophies and approaches to teaching and learning, and provided an appropriate definitional construct for this study in respect of student achievement.

Educational programs. The planned teaching and learning experiences provided by the schools for their students.

School district. A defined area in which children attend school, or are entitled to attend school, and which is governed by an elected board of trustees. A board is charged by the province or state with the responsibility of controlling education in the district. In the province of Alberta, the term is sometimes used synonymously with the terms school division and school jurisdiction.

Summary

In this introductory chapter, the general and specific research questions of the study have been stated, and the background, genesis, purpose, and justification for the study have been examined. Additionally, the need for research in the area of school-based management has been noted, specifically but not exclusively referring to the dearth of research data currently available, despite extensive writings in the area, and the study's potential contributions to knowledge in the areas of theory, policy, and practice have also been noted. Definitional analyses of key terms guiding the study were undertaken.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into nine chapters.

In Chapter 2, an extensive review of a sample of the literature is undertaken, adopting the perspective that school-based management needs to be examined both as a conceptual entity itself, and as an outgrowth and product of the very extensive reform, reorganization, and restructuring processes which have influenced education in recent decades. An examination of the recent, somewhat limited research in the area of school-based management outcomes is included in the review.

A description and rationale for the research method are provided in Chapter 3. Descriptions of the trustworthiness and ethical measures and their rationales employed in the study are provided. Limitations, delimitations, and assumptions potentially influencing the study are also stated.

In Chapter 4, a description of the data gathering and analysis procedures is provided.

The policy and professional contexts of school-based management in Snowfields School District are examined in Chapter 5, including an analysis of the provincial and school district policy contexts. The knowledge, experience, perceptions, and attitudes of principals and district executive staff of Snowfields School District toward school-based management prior to implementation are also summarized in this chapter.

In Chapter 6, the implementation processes employed with school-based management in Snowfields School District are examined, and their general influences and impacts are considered in order to establish the contextual circumstances in which the phenomenon's influence on school program quality and student achievement are considered.

The data in respect of school-based management, the quality of school programs, and student achievement are considered in Chapters 7 and 8, and a number of findings are made.

In the final chapter, Chapter 9, a summary of the study is provided, including the study's findings. A number of conclusions are drawn from these findings, and aspects of both the findings and conclusions are examined in the light of elements of the literature. Recommendations focused on practice and research in the school district are offered. The chapter, and the dissertation, are concluded with some personal reflections by the researcher.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Preamble

A review of the literature, according to Rudestam and Newton (1992), "provides a context for the proposed study and demonstrates why it is important and timely" (p. 46). Patton (1990) observed that a "review of relevant literature can also help focus the study" (p. 163).

This review of the literature was undertaken in the context of an era of ongoing restructuring and reorganization in education, many of the theories, processes, and effects of which are examined in a substantial literature. It was also undertaken in the awareness that school-based management is but one process, agency, and manifestation, amidst many, giving carriage to school and school district restructuring and reorganization. The phenomenon of school-based management, as a conceptual entity and as a process, can be examined, to a limited extent, in isolation. At the same time, school-based management cannot be examined, in terms of its influence and impact, in isolation from the plethora of other influences engaging schools and school districts, or from the influences, residual and ongoing, of other manifestations of change.

Introduction

School-based management, far from being a new concept (Carlos & Amsler, 1993; Cistone, 1989), is, according to Hartley (1994), "an idea whose time has come" (p. 129). Sheppard and Devereaux (1997) reported that

> Australia, New Zealand, all European countries (with the exceptions only of Portugal and some areas of Germany), and over forty states in the United States have adopted a site-based approach to management. In Canada, provinces such as Saskatchewan, Alberta, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and, more recently, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland have joined the long list of believers in the power of site-based management. (p. 30)

Wohlstetter and Briggs (1994) noted that 85% of the member districts of the Council of Great City Schools in the United States, including many of the largest, have implemented school-based management in some form. Caldwell (1990) cited specific developments in Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The momentum of implementation of school-based management practices has been accompanied by a large and rapidly growing pool of literature. Delaney (1994) noted that "a recent search of the ERIC database listed over 800 articles written on school-based management from 1982-1993 and the list grows daily" (p. 24). This review of the literature is not and could not be exhaustive, but conveys a sense of the contested and uncertain nature of the concept of school-based management, its place in the gamut of school reforms of recent decades, and its impact and influence.

The Problem of Definition

The definition used in Chapter 1 is an exemplar of definitions of school-based management which appeared frequently in the literature (for example, Alberta Education, 1996; Altieri, 1993; Brown, 1990; Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990b; Murphy & Beck, 1995; Oswald, 1995). In arriving at a suitable definition of school-based management, it became clear that the term *school-based management* was by no means accepted and used as a standard term for the concept and its associated processes. Bimber (1993) noted that "people speak of decentralization in terms of a panoply of concepts: creating smaller organizational units, reducing hierarchy and red tape, creating shared decision making, and increasing local autonomy" (p. ix). Brown (1994) observed that

> as one of the latest and most popular bandwagons for reforming public education, *school-based management* has several names: *site-based management, shared leadership* and *shared decision making. School-based management* serves as the most appropriate descriptor to represent the various aspects of this current reform movement. (p. 3, author's emphases)

Delaney (1994) also observed that in addition to the term decentralization, "the concept is more often referred to as any one of the following: site-based management, school-based budgeting, decentralized decision-making, collaborative school management, school-based governance or local school management" (p. 23). Herman and Herman (1993) enumerated some 15 terms which are used to identify forms of school-based management.

The range of such generic terms pointed to one dilemma in reaching clarity of definition. A further dimension to this dilemma evident in the literature was that such terms were interchanged freely (for example, Candoli, 1995; Conway & Calzi, 1995/1996) or, on the other hand, some precision was attributed to a particular term (e.g., Caldwell, 1994; Council on School Administration, 1997; Dimmock & Hattie, 1994; Gordon, 1992; Murphy, 1991; Quinn, 1996). Dimmock and Hattie distinguished between the terms decentralization and devolution. In their view, the former refers to the transfer of authority and the latter to the transfer of power, which they termed "the essence of devolution" (p. 38). In a similar vein, Kozolanka (1994) stated that "school-based management, site-based management, school-based budgeting, shared decision making and school-based decision making are being used interchangeably when in fact, there is a distinction" (p. 98). Kozolanka perceived school-based management as the decentralization of power and authority from central administrations to schools, and shared decision making as the transfer of decision making authority to major stakeholders through committee and council mechanisms. This is a useful distinction, although it was unclear what meaning she was attributing to other terms such as school-based budgeting. Sirotnik and Clark (1988) challenged the implications inherent in the term school-based management. They stated that

> choosing to talk about management focuses attention on a broad spectrum of activities, many of which are only indirectly related to instructional programs. Talking about school-based management seems to imply an either/or interpretation: either the school makes all its own decisions, or all decisions are made elsewhere. Such an interpretation fails to recognize that decisions made at school sites are part of a broader environment. (p. 660)

Interchangeable and confused usage of terminology was indicative of the even more critical difficulty of reaching an informed consensus in defining the concept of school-based management. Murphy and Beck (1995) noted that "SBM remains empirically and conceptually elusive and somewhat abstract but definitions are beginning to pile up" (pp. 12-13). The range of emergent definitions presented as confusing a picture of understandings of school-based management as did the range of descriptor terms. "Variations of the SBM concept have emerged; the result seems to be confusion and misunderstanding concerning these vague and sometimes conflicting definitions" (Lindquist & Mauriel, 1989, p. 404). This observation was supported by Ogawa and White (1994), who stated that "like so many terms in the educational lexicon, school-based management has a range of definitions. Given the many forms SBM has taken, the variety of definitions should come as no surprize" (p. 56). Herman and Herman (1993), however, also noted that "the differences in terminology are less important than the shifts in authority implicit in the process" (p. 9).

Lack of clarity and precision, however, cannot be perceived only in terms of being a product of diversity of understanding and application. Lindquist and Mauriel again noted that "either implicitly or explicitly, these definitions provide a bench mark against which the success or failure of a school's SBM effort may be partially evaluated" (p. 404). This view was supported by Davis and Hentschke (1994), and by Ogawa and White (1994), who stated that "in some instances, SBM documents note that such ambiguity is intentional, based on the belief that school-level actors should determine how SBM programs will operate" (p. 56). One effect of this has been noted by Ogawa and White,

> This ambiguity makes it difficult to assess the creative effectiveness of variously configured programs. Without a clear understanding of the practices being employed, making meaningful comparisons between different programs and their abilities to affect the performance of schools will be extremely difficult. (p. 75)

Notwithstanding such ambiguity, some definitional understanding can be reached by delineating the elements about which school-based management is usually structured. Herman and Herman (1993) identified three elements common to school-based management:

1. The shift, exchange, and balance of decision-making authority with regard to autonomy and accountability.

2. The consensus that those closest to, most impacted by, or primarily responsible for any decision implementation, should be the decision makers.

3. The empowerment and involvement of principals, teachers and other staff, and community, in school decision making. (p. 12)

Guskey and Peterson (1995/1996) perceived the key elements thus,

> The guiding premise of school-based decision making is that administrators, teachers and parents are the ones who best understand the contexts and cultures of the school, and so we must build their capacity to be jointly responsible for student learning. (p. 10)

Mohrman and Wohlstetter (1994) elaborated this element in terms of the political dimension alluded to by Dimmock and Hattie (1994),

> SBM has been conceptualized as an example of the school reform movement that addresses the power balance between schools and their clients. The premise of this approach to reform . . . is that schools will be better able to produce results that are in line with their clients' preferences if they have a more direct link to their clientele and if they have a greater degree of control over their resources. (pp. 253-254)

Under what they term "the rubric of restructuring" (p. 330), Hallinger, Murphy, and Hausman (1992) provided further elaboration,

> Considered difficult to capture to everyone's satisfaction, restructuring is not quite so amorphous a construct as critics sometimes argue. Basically, restructuring includes endeavors to (a) decentralize the organization, management and governance of schooling; (b) empower those closest to students in the classroom (i.e., teachers, parents and principals); (c) create new roles and responsibilities for all the players in the system; and (d) transform the learning-teaching process that unfolds in classrooms. (p. 330)

After conducting an extensive review of definitions of school-based management, Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz (1990), cited in Mohrman, Wohlstetter, and

Associates (1994), derived a definition which attempted to encompass all of the common elements of school-based management. This definition, described by Ogawa and White (1994) as "comprehensive, if cumbersome" (p. 56), stated that

> school-based management can be viewed conceptually as a formal alteration of governance structures, as a form of decentralization that identifies the individual school as the primary unit of improvement and relies on the redistribution of decision-making authority as the primary means through which improvements might be stimulated and sustained. Some formal authority to make decisions in the domains of budget, personnel and programs is delegated to and often distributed among site-level actors. Some formal structure (council, committee, team, board) often composed of principals, teachers, parents, and, at times, students and community residents is created so that site participants can be directly involved in school-wide decision making. (p. 56)

The comprehensive nature of this definition may, however, engender some misconceptions. For example, although it is a fairly common element in the implementation of school-based management, in many instances there are no requirements, or even expectations, that formal structures such as site councils be formed. Murphy and Beck (1995) have also cautioned thus,

> In reality, SBM is less a coherent intervention than variations on a theme. It materializes in a variety of ways and forms in different settings: (a) stressing different components and strategies to varying degrees; (b) empowering different sets of stakeholders in various communities differently; (c) meaning quite different things to different groups of stakeholders, to different actors at the same school, and to similar role occupants throughout the same district; and (d) being packaged in diverse ways with other reform initiatives. (p. 7)

Because of the definitional ambiguity surrounding the concept of school-based management, this study used descriptor terms from the literature interchangeably, unless contextual analysis of the use of each term indicated that this was an inappropriate strategy.

School-Based Management in Context

The very substantial attempts in recent decades to engender change in schools and school systems are frequently described metaphorically as waves. The first wave of sustained reform attempts, commencing in the 1960s, was focused very much on school renewal, reform, and improvement. "The second wave of reform, still in motion," noted Williams (1992), "suggests nothing less than restructuring the education system. This approach focuses on improving the effectiveness of schooling by rearranging its components and realigning the distribution of responsibilities" (p. 10). Fullan (1991) described the first wave of reform as intensification, in which much existing practice is subjected to increasing mandating, monitoring, and specification. The second wave, in Fullan's view, is that of restructuring, typified by teachers and others being involved in decision-making, collaborative work cultures, and so forth.

In the context of the waves of reform, school-based management has assumed a significant and growing role. "School-based management is rapidly becoming the centerpiece of the current wave of reform" (David, 1989, p. 45). Some writers attributed this not to a demonstrated need to restructure for enhanced performance, but to a slavish following of industrial trends. Conway and Calzi (1995/1996), for example, stated that "just as earlier scientific management studies spurred education's cult of efficiency, so too decentralization and empowerment have moved from industry to education" (p. 46). Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz (1990b) observed that

> proposals to delegate decision making authority to subunits of school districts or to individual sites and proposals to distribute that authority among various combinations of administrators, teachers, parents and community residents have been enacted, rescinded and reenacted for decades. (p. 296)

They also observed that

> the documentary data suggests that these initiatives tend to surface during periods of intense stress . . . when, in sum, a turbulent environment generates a host of highly salient demands and the system is pressed to search for solutions to a cluster of seemingly intractable problems. (p. 297)

However, Sackney and Dibski (1994) presented a more moderate perspective,

> Philosophically, school-based management calls for a shift from a heavy reliance on a structural-functionalist paradigm to one characterised as being much more "interpretive" and "humanist" in orientation. The individual, according to this paradigm, is held to be more important and there is more emphasis on what Habermas calls communicative rationality and consensus building. Such a view entails a much more collaborative and participative approach to decision-making. (p. 105)

This perspective was echoed by Prasch (1990) and Hargreaves (1994). In Prasch's view,

> Imbedded in many of the approaches to restructuring is the concept of site-based (or school-based) management (SBM). SBM is consistent with, if not parallel to other popular themes such as teacher empowerment and shared decision making. The concept fits industry's move toward decentralization and participatory management--the idea that decisions are better made at operational points in the hierarchy. (p. 1)

Theoretical Foundations of School-Based Management

An Emerging Concept

School-based management is not a new concept nor can ownership claims be made on it by individuals or groups (Cistone, 1989; Marburger, 1985; White, 1991). Marburger has noted that "no-one invented school-based management. Rather, it seems to have emerged independently as a response to problems that resulted from the centralization of decision-making and a shift in society's values away from control and toward autonomy" (p. 27). Estler (1988) identified a succession of decision-making modes in education based in assumptions of choice. She identified these modes as rational-bureaucratic, participatory, political, and organized anarchy. Estler claimed that "over time, rather than a denial of prior thinking, successive models have reintegrated elements of earlier traditions in new ways, yielding fuller explanations for the reality of educational decision making" (p. 306). Murphy and Beck (1995) have identified antecedents of school-based management in the United States in the late 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. There was, however, considerable evidence in the literature that the contemporary focus on school-based management began to emerge with the first wave of reform, and is developing to its present position of prominence with the second wave (David, 1989; Herman & Herman, 1993; Sackney & Dibski, 1994). David has observed in respect of the first wave of reform,

> In the 1960s and 1970s, certain forms of school-based management, usually called decentralization and school-based budgeting, had a wave of popularity. They were adopted in order to give political power to local communities, increase administrative efficiency, or offset state authority. (p. 45)

David further observed that "districts are implementing school-based management today to bring about significant change in educational practice: to empower school staff to create conditions in schools that facilitate improvement, innovation and continuous professional growth" (p. 45).

The emergence has been far from smooth, and has been marked by inconsistency and contestation, as Fullan (1993) has observed,

> The present is a combination of bifurcation and confusion. The former is represented on one hand, by centralists who see greater top-down regulation, accountability and control of the educational establishment as the answer. This includes, by the way, strategies such as local management of schools which attempt to place more power in the hands of local interests outside the school. The other hand of bifurcation is represented by the reconstructionists who see greater control by school-based teachers and other educators as the basic solution. (p. 2)

Such bifurcation and confusion is further exacerbated by the fact that school-based management frequently encompasses elements of the perspectives espoused by both the centralists and the reconstructionists. Bimber (1993) noted that

> in practice, decentralization plans too often suffer from disagreement over whether decentralization is primarily intended to draw more people--teachers and parents--into the decision-making process or whether it is primarily intended to make schools more autonomous from central-office bureaucracies. Because of this disagreement, and because of the reluctance of boards, superintendents, and other administrators to relinquish real power, decentralized plans often result in fragmented decision-making authority, adding even more complexity to administrative processes. (pp. 36-37)

Perestroika and Postmodernism

The emergence of educational reconstruction in the form of school-based management is clearly predicated on the waves of educational reform, although the relationship is not truly or necessarily symbiotic in nature. Rather, the reform waves have provided an appropriate setting from which and in which school-based management may flourish. Several writers have used the contemporary metaphor of perestroika to describe this flourishing (Cistone, 1989; Lawton, 1992). Lawton has described such educational perestroika as "a reorganization that replaces central planning, control and supervision with a deregulated, decentralized system" (p. 139).

The processes embodied in educational perestroika mirror significant reconceptualizations of the nature of control in a postmodern context. Usher and Edwards (1994), citing Bauman (1992), observed that postmodernity "is marked by a view of the human world as irreducibly and irrevocably pluralistic, split into a multitude of sovereign units and sites of authority, with no horizontal or vertical order, either in actuality or in potency" (p. 12). Achilles (1994) perceived the changes in the nature of control thus,

> As the sociological paradigm shifts from industrial-age mechanistic processes to an information-age future, there is emerging a parallel move from schools as tightly-coupled, highly bureaucratic structures to schools as loosely-coupled entities run by site-based administration (SBA). (p. 13)

Weiss (1990) identified five forms of control in school organizations:

1. Professional control.
2. Administrative control.
3. Political control.
4. Market control.
5. Control through values and ideas. (pp. 93-119)

She posited that each form of control is connected with different goals and values, and that schools are "tapestries of control" (p. 124). Carlos and Amsler (1993) suggested that the loci of power and authority largely determine whether school-based management is a "symbolic gesture or a genuine redefinition of power" (p. 2). Estler (1988) observed that "perhaps more than any other tradition within the decision-making literature, the participatory model is rooted more in values and beliefs than in empiricism" (p. 309). Caldwell and Spinks (1992) perceived such perspectives as evidence of "the collapse of bureaucracies in education" (p. 14), and argued that the collapse is of such significance that it can be labeled as an "educational megatrend" (pp. 14-16).

In contrast, Firestone and Corbett (1988), citing House (1981), identified three perspectives by which the dynamics of change can be interpreted at a local level:

1. Technological perspectives, by which change implementation is considered as a technical process subject to rational analysis.

2. Political-rational perspectives, which consider that analysis is impossible because of the divergent interests of those involved.

3. Cultural--"interprets differences stemming from enduring values and cognitions of those involved" (p. 323).

They noted that "generated by the behavioral regularities of the settings in which people live, over time these values assume a life of their own and continue even after those regularities change" (p. 323).

Propelling Forces

Perestroika, postmodernism, and the possible collapse of bureaucracy are clearly potent influences in the emergence of school-based management. However, separately and collectively, they do not provide a sufficiently robust and coherent explanation for the increasing adoption of the strategy. Lawton (1992) suggested that the following factors may be instrumental in propelling this emergence:

1. A legitimation crisis, which reflects concerns about overall school effectiveness, equitability, and inadequacies in governance structures.

2. Concern about educational effectiveness, or, more accurately, the perceived ineffectiveness of education.

3. Concern about efficiency.

4. The managerial revolution, which "reflects a philosophy of operation that capitalizes on the desires of individuals for autonomy, productivity and creativity, even at a cost of a loss of central control" (p. 145).

5. A populist movement reflecting demands for choice, control, and the recognition of collective rights.

6. A crisis in capitalism.

7. Provider capture, a term used to reflect the belief that bureaucracies serve the interests of their members better than those of their clients. (pp. 140-150)

However, Weiler (1993) also examined the political dynamics of decentralization, and the prevailing arguments in support of the process, from a sociological perspective. He concluded that there were three arguments propelling the debate:

1. Decentralization and the redistribution of authority, which reflects a concern for the sharing of power.

2. Decentralization and efficiency, which focuses on the management of resources.

3. Decentralization and the cultures of learning, which is concerned with the decentralization of educational content. (p. 57)

From the perspective adopted by him, Weiler concluded that, in general, the concept of educational decentralization is "a precarious and problematic proposition" (p. 66).

In examining the Australian context of decentralization and devolution, Dimmock and Hattie (1994) enumerated five explanations for the emergence of the concepts, which they also viewed from essentially sociopolitical perspectives. They stated that "public policy, including decentralisation of education, is best seen as springing from the interaction of political power and national values as mediated by structures of policy making and by the role of public opinion" (p. 39). Dimmock and Hattie's explanations were:

1. Dissatisfaction theory, which encompasses public discontent with educational standards and reforms.

2. Values based explanations, which are concerned with matters of equality, efficiency, liberty, and choice.

3. Political decentralization as an appropriate structure to meet diversity.

4. The outcomes of school effectiveness research.

5. Teacher professionalism and empowerment. (pp. 39-40)

Principles and Goals

Altieri (1993) has observed that "school-based management is a complex process that entails collaboration, conflict management and continual reconceptualization" (p. 31). The processes are dynamic as well as complex, as Wissler and Ortiz (1988) noted,

> Decentralization is not a "once learned, always in place" change process. Organizations are as dynamic as the human body. The process must be repeated over and over and re-learned repeatedly if it is to stay viable. So when we speak of decentralization, we mean a continuing process. (p. 50)

Notwithstanding, it is possible to isolate general principles and goals of school-based management from the plethora of literature. The Nova Scotia Department of Education (1993), for example, has established guiding principles underpinning the implementation of school-based management in that province:

1. The primary purpose for school-based management is to increase student achievement and success through improved educational services to students; it is therefore a student focused initiative.

2. There is a need for management structures which are flexible, adaptable, and responsive to local needs and capabilities.

3. Those closest to the challenges of education are best qualified to develop and implement solutions to the problems associated with increasing student achievement and success.

4. Management requires authority to make decisions and is fully accountable for the results of these decisions.

5. Management ensures effective implementation of an ongoing support for curriculum. (p. 4)

The Department has also translated these principles into a series of goals, stating that "the prime goal for SBM is to increase student achievement and success" (p. 3). Subsidiary goals were identified as:

1. Making schools more responsive to local needs.

2. Making schools more accountable for results.

3. Enabling schools to make decisions which are economic, efficient, and equitable.

4. Increasing quality and quantity of communications.

5. Building partnerships with parents, businesses, and community.

6. Empowering principals and teachers.

7. Enhancing student involvement in learning. (p. 3)

References to other facets of principles and goals appeared in the literature. Schlechty (1990) and Herman and Herman (1993) perceived the abilities of schools to meet needs quickly and flexibly, and to understand the "unique configurations" (Schlechty, p. 79) in each setting, as important underpinnings. Bailey (1991) observed that "school-site management will not work unless authorities view each school as a center for change" (p. 26). Greenhalgh (1984) noted an ethical dimension when he stated that "decentralization of school governance and direction is a response to the need for providing local school programs that are meaningful and right for the consumer--not necessarily administratively tidy--but timely and important" (pp. 15-16). Bailey considered that "a process of reciprocal interaction" (p. 40) is necessary. He defined the process as "power from the public and power to the public" (p. 40).

Teacher empowerment is a predominant theme in the school-based management literature as it is considered to be both a key goal and an important underpinning principle of the concept. Brown (1994) has elucidated this facet thus,

> Based on organizational and leadership theory and concepts of collegiality and professionalism, qualities of school-based management may indeed recast the role of those on the front lines of education--teachers--into roles that allow them to become an integral part of determining policies that will be implemented in developing successful learning environments for students. Because previous reform efforts have not enabled teachers to add their voices to proposed solutions for the improvement of schooling, school-based management provides an avenue for change based on teachers' views and beliefs. (p. 3)

Bailey (1991) concurred with this perspective, having stated that

> school-site management (not intended to solve all of our problems or be a passing fancy either) provides a workable structural arena in which professionals can apply their craft with experienced peers as guides and ultimate results evaluated by the community. (p. 164)

Sirotnik and Clark (1988) brought a measure of realism to this perspective, having stated that "the ultimate power to change is--and always has been--in the heads, hands, and hearts of the educators who work in the schools. Decisions must be made where the action is" (p. 664).

First- and Second-Order Change

Fullan (1991), citing the writings of Cuban (1988), has noted the importance of second-order change in the current restructuring and reform agendas. He stated that "*second-order changes* seek to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together, including new goals, structures, and roles (e.g., collaborative work structures)" (p. 29, author's emphasis). First-order changes are focused on matters of effectiveness and efficiency without fundamentally affecting organizational structures and roles. Fullan further noted that "most changes since the turn of the century have been first-order changes, aimed to improve the quality of what already existed. Second-order reforms largely failed" (p. 29). Clearly, second-order changes are both an underpinning principle and a clear goal of the school-based management movement. Conley and Bacharach (1990) observed that

> however, school-site management will not guarantee that the same bureaucratic strategies for managing teachers will not emerge in this current wave of reform. For school-site management to succeed, it must be developed with the specific goal of creating a professional work environment for teachers. Without this

> goal, school-site management may become just another bureaucratic mode of control masquerading as a real reform. (pp. 539-540)

Glickman (1993) developed a typology of governance decisions in terms of their possible influence (see Table 2.1). While this provided a useful indication of the general nature of school-site decisions, and of possible areas of focus for both first and second order change, the typology is conceptually flawed to the extent that the site-specific nature of school-based management processes will largely determine the potential influence of decisions.

Reitzug and Capper (1996) conceptualized school-based management as framed along three continua: scope of authority, scope of involvement, and scope of influence, with related practice in each of these distinct but interrelated continua grounded in paradigms ranging from structural-functionalism to critical theory. They determined that "practices on each scope can range from rather traditional, hierarchical decision-making practices to practices significantly oriented toward power sharing" (p. 57).

Centralization and Decentralization

The nature of the relationships between centralization and decentralization assumes some importance in the theoretical understandings of educational restructuring processes. Several writers (e.g., Caldwell, 1977; Caldwell, Smilanich, & Spinks, 1988; Mintzberg, 1983) considered that the relationship was that of a continuum "whose poles cannot be attained in reality" (Caldwell, 1977, p. 14). Other writers, however, have conceptualized the relationship in more complex ways. Lauglo and McLean (1985) stated that

> if the aim is to describe accurately the patterns of influence and control in education, the polarity of centralized versus decentralized control is clearly inadequate, though it provides a first starting-point for analysis. If detailed description is the aim, it is appropriate to think in terms of a multidimensional matrix where some of the dimensions might be: type of issue, the agency or group exerting influence, the channel of influence involved, and the stage in the decision-making process. (p. 19)

TABLE 2.1

Governance decisions and examples of possible educational impacts

Adapted from Glickman (1993)

Zero-impact decisions	***Minimal-impact decisions***	***Core-impact decisions***	***Comprehensive-impact decisions***
Parking	Text adoption	Curriculum	School budget
Bus duty	Parent programs	Staff development	Personnel hiring
Staff lounge	Small budgets	Instructional programs	Personnel deployment
Lunch supervision	Discipline policy	Student assessment	Personnel evaluation
		Instructional budget	
		Coaching	

Mohrman and Wohlstetter (1994), Sharpe (1994), and Swanson (1989) supported this contention. Sharpe described four sets of variables which, in his view, essentially structured such multidimensionality. These were (a) input variables (e.g., mission and goals), (b) structural variables (e.g., organizational structure), (c) process variables (e.g., policy determination, budgeting), and (d) relations with the environment (e.g., accountability processes). Mohrman and Wohlstetter added an operational dimension,

> School-based management is not an either-or proposition where the schools are automatically given control over all aspects of education or control is fully vested in the district. Rather, it is a set of design choices. Furthermore, SBM is not simply a set of decisions about the governance system; rather it is the creation of a whole set of organizational design features that enable the school-level participants to greatly enhance their influence and their involvement in the creation of high-performing schools. In addition, SBM needs to be integrally related to other elements of school reform, for example in the areas of teaching and learning, in order for student performance to improve. (pp. 12-13)

Cheung and Cheng (1996) endorsed these perspectives and suggested a structure of boundaries, having noted that "in general, external boundaries frame the degree of autonomy of the school" (p. 28). They suggested that there are boundaries of resources, authority, and curriculum implementation and change. Bimber (1993) distinguished between administrative and political decentralization, claiming that the former engenders change within a school system, with the latter relocating authority out of the existing structure to a governing body. Brown (1987) and Lauglo and McLean (1985) are in general agreement with this typification, with Brown also observing that recentralization of political decentralization would most likely require legislative authority, while administrative or bureaucratic recentralization could be achieved by administrative action. While by no means uniform, there were clear indications in the literature (e.g., Herman & Herman, 1993; Wohlstetter & Odden, 1992) that the areas of budget, personnel, and curriculum are the most common areas on which school-based management processes are focused, although their place in the decentralization typifications would be influenced by their specific contexts. Brown (1994), Fullan and

Miles (1992), and Levine and Eubanks (1992) have all observed that school-based management is, or should be, site-specific. Hence, theoretically, the boundaries established at a school site would be aligned to the specific ecology of that site, and would be sufficiently flexible to accommodate reconceptualizations both internally and externally. In accepting that contention, Schlechty's (1990) perspective was apt,

> Thus the question is not one of centralization versus decentralization. Rather, the questions are: What is best decentralized and what is best centralized? What can be centralized and what can be decentralized? What cannot be decentralized and what cannot be centralized? (p. 81)

Whatever the answers to these questions might be in the context of each school site, there is one important precept underpinning the centralization and decentralization conundrum, stated by Dimmock and Hattie (1994), "school-based management places emphasis on the individual school as the fundamental decision-making unit within the education system" (p. 40). However, Herman and Herman (1993) also observed that "although school-based management focuses on individual schools, in fact, it is a reform of the entire school system" (p. 244).

With the perception of the school as the fundamental decision-making unit, the nature of the relationship between the school and school system's central authority will, or should, be transformed in some important ways. David's (1989) perception of this transformation has been noted in Chapter 1. However, the perception was also well encapsulated by Goldring and Rallis (1993),

> If central offices relegate power to schools, it must be accompanied by innovative ways of thinking about leadership, involvement and school improvement. Otherwise, bureaucracy merely relocates from the central office to the school site, with no new power being gained by school personnel and the community. It follows that the central office must assume a support role providing resources, technical assistance and training that enables schools to succeed. (p. 61)

Participation and Collaboration

The principles and goals of school-based management convey strong expectations of participation and collaboration. Johnson and Hedemann (1994) have stated clearly that "underlying the policies of devolution are expectations that principals and teachers will employ collaborative processes to fulfill the new roles that have been handed to them" (pp. 298-299). They also identified a practical reason for employing participative and collaborative strategies by noting that "the problems of teaching and schooling are too great to be dealt with alone and that the sharing of individual knowledge and understanding about issues will produce more enriched responses to those issues" (p. 299). While this statement is demonstrably true in any school environment, the advent of school-based management clearly makes it an added imperative. However, Brown (1991) noted that "the approach is not usually designed to increase the participation of teachers and parents for its own sake. Rather, it offers the hope that schools can be made better through the involvement of teachers and parents" (p. 4).

Marburger (1985), in contrast, offered an even more emphatic perspective. He stated that "the other essential feature of school-based management is that all those involved with that local school will participate in making those decisions" (p. 19). However, David (1995/1996) was not in full agreement with this perspective. She noted that

> participatory management does not mean that everyone decides everything. Some decisions are best left to the professionals in the school, some to the parents, and others to students. Some decisions are appropriately made by representatives of several constituencies, others by a formal schoolwide body. Nor does site-based management mean that all decisions are appropriately made at the school level. Schools belong to larger systems--districts and states--that must provide a strong center if decentralization is to create something more than anarchy. (p. 7)

Conway (1984) examined facets of participative decision making and observed that there are three dimensions--the degree of participation, and the content and scope of the decisions--affecting decision quality. He also identified three modes of participation in which personnel are clustered; mandated versus voluntary participation, formal versus informal participation, and direct (whole group) versus indirect (representational) participation. Conway concluded that

> time and time again the studies in education have concluded that teachers do not view their role in decision making in the same way in all situations, that too much participation is almost as detrimental as not enough, and that satisfaction is related to the content of the issues at hand. (p. 30)

Glickman (1990) also cautioned that

> the notion that a school that uses a process of shared governance is a utopia of people holding hands and dancing through rose petals is quite misleading. Shared governance brings differences to the surface, it gives everyone equal rights and responsibilities to influence school-wide decisions, and it intensifies ideological debate. (p. 71)

Firestone (1992) perceived linkages between organizational and instructional design. He utilized metaphors of students as learners and students as workers to exemplify these linkages (see Table 2.2). He noted that "the learner metaphor is most conducive to the kind of higher-order thinking that reformers believe will become increasingly necessary" (p. 267).

School-Based Management and Leadership

> In order to have effective self-management in school, we need leaders who create a nurturing environment with a well-balanced autonomy in what to do and how to do which develops conditions for the activating of self-management cycles at all levels. Leadership is therefore the driving force for initiating and developing self-management in school. (Cheung & Cheng, 1996, p. 26)

The roles of principals as the driving force of leadership for change in schools was a dominant theme in the literature, summarized most aptly by Fullan (1991), who stated that "as long as we have schools and principals, if the principal does not lead changes in the culture of the school, or if he or she leaves it to others, it normally will not get done. That is, improvement will not happen" (p. 169). Peel and Walker (1994) have confirmed that "site-based management cannot succeed without the principal's leadership and support" (p. 41). Louis and Miles (1990), cited by Fullan (1991), distinguished between leadership and management. In their view "leadership relates to mission, direction, inspiration. Management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done, working effectively with people" (pp. 157-158). Fullan

TABLE 2.2

Theoretical perspectives: Teaching, learning, and organizational design

Adapted from Firestone (1992)

CLASSROOM METAPHOR	***Student as learner:*** Emphasizes student learning, intrinsic motivation, student thinking, problem solving, and knowledge relationships	***Student as worker:*** Product oriented, emphasizing outcomes, passive recipience, extrinsic motivation, and error suppression; knowledge presented as discrete facts and skills
TEACHING RESEARCH PARADIGM	***Reflective practice:*** Complex theories about teaching used to make judgements; teachers as problem solvers; content and student capacities considered	***Direct instruction:*** Rule focused--teachers manage for effective instruction using rules across students and content; time on task and efficiency emphasized
ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN	***Professionalism:*** Assumes uncertainty and the need for problem solving; decentralization of strategic decisions; stresses training, mutual adjustment, and intrinsic incentives	***Bureaucracy:*** Assumes high certainty and need for expert knowledge, centralization of strategic decisions; emphasizes standardization, direct supervision, outcomes, including testing, and external incentives

commented on this view that "successful principals and other organizational heads do both functions simultaneously and iteratively. It is also important to note that when we refer to management we are not talking about management for stability, but also management for change" (p. 158). This view was endorsed by Mutchler and Duttweiler (1990). Thus, the concept of school-based management is imbued with a strong dimension of proactive leadership, especially but not exclusively by principals.

Studies of the principalship and leadership have shown that school-based management contributes to the shaping of leadership styles. For example, Peel and Walker (1994) studied 26 principals in North Carolina who were committed to teacher empowerment in site-based management environments. These principals shared the following characteristics:

1. A strong commitment to school improvement and shared decision making.
2. A willingness to take risks.
3. A willingness to communicate.
4. An awareness of potential problems. (pp. 41-42)

These characteristics may well be exhibited by principals in other than school-based management and teacher empowerment environments, however, the importance of this study was that it demonstrated a clear preponderance of these traits in the defining and reshaping of leadership styles in the context of school-based management and teacher empowerment environments. Wohlstetter and Briggs (1994) reported on a study in 25 elementary and middle schools in the United States, Canada, and Australia in which the principal's role in school-based management was examined. The study found that

> the SBM plans that were most successful in improving performance were those that not only empowered people at the school site to make decisions, but also trained them for their new roles, provided information to guide their decision making, and established rewards for performance. In each of these areas, the most successful principals were effective in moving four critical resources--power, knowledge and skills training, information and rewards--to teachers and community members. (p. 14)

Murphy and Beck (1994) endorsed this perspective. They stated that "they must learn to lead, not from the apex of the organizational pyramid, but from the center of a web of personal relationships. Their base of influence must be professional expertise and moral imperative rather than line authority" (p. 10). They also commented that "what is becoming increasingly apparent is that the process dimensions of leading from the center need to be united with insights about learning and teaching if this evolving role for principals is to lead to important benefits for students" (p. 30). Hallinger and Heck (1996) concluded that "the most theoretically and empirically robust models that have been used to study leadership effects tell us that principal leadership that makes a difference is aimed toward influencing internal school processes that are directly linked to student learning" (p. 38).

The successful changes observed in the Wohlstetter and Briggs study are clearly second-order changes, and are changes which are not easily wrought. Starratt (1995) commented that "school-based leadership will always be organized in the zone between demands and constraints" (p. 9). Fullan (1993) observed that "to restructure is not to reculture . . . changing formal structures is not the same as changing norms, habits, skills and beliefs" (p. 49). Fullan also observed that the lack of conceptual clarity about school-based management contributes to this difficulty. He stated that "conceptual clarity is hampered by the widespread use of jargon, and by the coexistence of superficial and substantive attempts at change operating under the same labels--restructuring, site-based management, collaborative cultures, transformative leadership, and the like" (p. 174). There are other dimensions of this difficulty, as noted by Goldring and Rallis (1993), "although principals are becoming more accountable to their school community with school-based management, they are still perceived as the primary school leader. These responsibilities result in significant role ambiguity" (p. 60). Starratt noted that "the principal is an agent of multiple constituencies" (p. 5).

Cultural reorientation and adjustments to leadership praxis are not confined to principals in school-based management environments. The superintendent's role is subjected to change forces akin to those impacting on the principalship, as Candoli (1995) observed,

> While still assuming the responsibility for the education of all students in the system, the emerging role is more one of collaboration, of support activity, of consensus building and of providing vision and leadership to a most disparate set of schools and staff in order to provide the best possible program of education for students in the district. (p. 18)

This view was firmly endorsed by Fullan (1991), who noted that "the district administrator is the single most important individual for setting the expectations and tone of the pattern of change with the local district" (p. 101).

Just as principals are faced with the challenges of second-order change, superintendents are also faced with similar challenges (Buckley, 1993; David, 1989; Herman & Herman, 1993; Lindelow & Heyndericks, 1989). David commented on the realignment of school and district relationships necessary for the effective implementation of school-based management, as cited in Chapter 1. The nature of the challenge for superintendents was stated by Prasch (1990),

> Although restricted to a softer leadership style, the superintendent must nevertheless transmit an overall inspirational vision of mission to the entire organization. Such a vision is extremely important to SBM because it provides the glue that holds the organization together. The task is accomplished not by making pronouncements but by engaging staff in conversations that help them work together to develop and accept consensus. Such work depends on establishing the institutional climate for collegial work and skill in group dynamics. (p. 19)

The concept of teacher empowerment is imbedded in the principles and goals of school-based management. Where processes of teacher empowerment, collegiality, and participative decision-making are at work, there is some influence on the patterns of leadership in schools. Such processes represent a distinct cultural change, as Brown (1994) noted, "devoid of significant leadership roles exclusive of administrative positions, teachers do not traditionally consider their role or responsibility in making decisions concerning school wide managerial or operational factors" (p. 2). Notwithstanding, Brown further noted that "the mere thought of professionals not having considerable input concerning issues and decisions that occur each day seems somewhat absurd" (p. 21). The adjustment to traditional patterns of leadership and influence in schools theoretically enhances the school's prime functions of teaching and learning. "Development of teacher leadership draws principals and teachers together to confront directly the ambiguities associated with their primary task: instructional leadership" (Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992, p. 154). However, Smylie (1992) surveyed teachers in a midwest United States metropolitan school district (K-9) and found that "teachers' willingness to participate in school decision making is influenced primarily by their relationships with their principal" (p. 63). Purkey (1990) cautioned that school-based management and teacher empowerment are not synonymous, and that the former can exist without the latter.

However, as with principals and superintendents, such a vast cultural change may engage teachers in difficult matters and oblige them to confront discomfiting situations (Brown, 1994; Conley, 1989; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth, 1992). Conley noted that "a participatory mode of management that alters the authority structure of a school . . . is likely to precipitate disagreements among various parties over who should have the authority to implement various decisions" (p. 368). Brown (1994), citing Glickman (1990), expressed concern about teachers attaining a sense of readiness for leadership roles. He observed that "it may be ill-advised for schools to initiate empowerment if the faculties are reluctant to share such opportunities" (p. 23).

Teacher empowerment may also have unanticipated consequences. Conley (1989) has suggested that empowerment may engage teachers in a web of influence with unforeseen effects,

> Clearly, the more that teachers are involved in formulating, implementing, and evaluating school and district policies and programs, the more influence they can be expected to have on school management decisions. Less obviously, such involvement also gives the school and the district a means of influencing teachers' classroom decision making. (p. 375)

School-Based Management and Student Achievement

The theme of enhanced teaching, learning, and student achievement was a consistent one in the school-based management literature (Peterson, 1991). David (1995/1996) observed that "reasons for initiating site-based management run the gamut, yet virtually all are cloaked in the language of increasing student achievement" (p. 5).

The Nova Scotia Department of Education statements were typical examples. Candoli (1995) strongly emphasized the aspect of student achievement when he stated that

> one of the strongest rationales for moving toward the SBM model of operation is the capacity to make the school more responsive to student needs. The basic premise of SBM is developing appropriate student goals and the flexibility needed to reach these goals. (p. 25)

Greenhalgh (1984) and Chubb and Moe (1990) held similar views.

However, while acknowledging the vital importance of innovation being linked to student achievement, Hopkins, Ainscow, and West (1994) identified a pragmatic perspective,

> The history of educational innovation is littered with the skeletons of innovations and changes whose implementers failed to recognize that successful school improvement efforts are characterized by a dual emphasis on enhancing the school's capacity for change and implementing specific reforms--both of which have as their ultimate goal an increase in student achievement. (p. 83)

Glickman (1990) held a more finely focused perspective about student achievement. He observed that

> what should drive the efforts of an empowered school are *patterns* of improved learning. Thus any change in a particular measure of achievement can be explained either as a redirection of energies to more important things or as a signal that revived attention is needed. (p. 73, author's emphasis)

In the section, Emerging Patterns of Influence, the literature concerning the actual influence of school-based management on student achievement is examined.

Critique of the Theory of School-Based Management

Both first- and second-wave reform movements have attracted strong criticism on philosophical, political, economic, or social grounds.

Weiler (1993) examined the concept of decentralization from a sociological perspective, reaching the following conclusions, which he termed "an interim assessment" (p. 66):

1. The notion of decentralization as redistribution of power seems incompatible with the modern state's interest in maintaining control and discharging key functions.

2. Decentralization as a means of educational efficiency has some potential, provided it is accompanied by a real division of authority.

3. Decentralizing the contents of learning as one method of accommodating diversity is valid and meaningful, although "it encounters the conflicting claims of different conceptions of knowledge, which contrast a kind of learning that is more geared to the specifics of cultural contexts with the national and international universalities" (p. 66).

Weiler concluded, therefore, that "the idea of decentralization proves fundamentally paradoxical and precarious, presenting the state with one of its more profound and intractable dilemmas" (p. 78).

Raywid (1990) delineated further facets of this dilemma:

1. Ensuring the protection of the larger public interest assumes "that state and district guidelines would continue to reflect the public interest and keep schools operating within parameters outlined by public policy" (p. 191).

2. There is a need to protect the interests of the students.

3. There is a need to protect the integrity of technical knowledge and professional judgement.

4. "The tyranny of the majority" (p. 193).

James (1991) made the following observation,

> It does not seem likely that school-by-school and teacher-by-teacher reform sporadically developed according to the peculiarities of local organizations, cultures, and practices, will move the overall structure of schooling and its enduring regularities toward a new synthesis without acting as well through the state. (p. 174)

Hartley (1994), however, commenting on the school self-management phenomenon in Britain, has detected what he termed "an emerging isomorphism in the management of control" (p. 241). He perceived centralized control of curriculum, and student assessment and testing programs as underpinning such isomorphism and ameliorating the impact of choice and participation.

Anderson and Dixon (1993) supported Weiler's contentions but reached a less tentative conclusion, "although the current wave of school reform included site-based management, in practice it does not challenge the fundamentally conservative interests of existing government structures" (p. 59). Angus (1994) elaborated this perspective,

> Participants are to operate with limited discretion granted from above and according to approved formats within government control. Despite the rhetoric of anti-bureaucracy, this has the effect of reinforcing among educational participants bureaucratic modes of thinking while partially describing the bureaucratic structures of control within which participation occurs. (p. 82)

The irony of this was not lost on Johnson and Boles (1994), who noted that "although SBM is designed to encourage those in the schools to take charge of their own organizations, the prevailing model for achieving this change is a top-down one in which district officials delegate authority and responsibility" (p.112). Chubb and Moe (1990) commented that

> school-based management . . . is another way of controlling the schools within an essentially bureaucratic system. Its very name, in fact, is wonderfully appropriate, for what it suggests is that principals, teachers, and others at the lower reaches are fundamentally engaged in the "management" of schools--a bureaucratic conception, if ever there was one, of what effective education is all about. (p. 201)

Hargreaves (1994) held an even stronger view,

> When school-based management is implemented in a system where public funding is scarce and bureaucratic control over curriculum and assessment has been retained or reinforced, this can lead to self-seeking competitiveness around narrowly defined goals of basic skills or academic success. Hence, school-based management can lead not to devolution of decision-making but displacement of blame. (p. 7)

Wohlstetter (1995) has also observed that when school-based management is implemented on the narrow political grounds of power shifting, "SBM is an inadequate effort to improve school performance" (p. 26). Angus (1994) has advanced the argument that those who are being affected by decentralization are largely not seeking transfer of power and decision making authority. He stated that

> we need to remember that there has been no groundswell of support for the new educational agenda of school-level managerialism, accountability and quality control among educators or parent organizations, whose views on schooling cannot be dismissed simply as naive and self-interested. (p. 81)

While Angus was unclear in stating what he considered to be a "groundswell," devolutionary concepts have, in fact, been advocated for some time (for example, Coons, Clune, & Sugerman, 1970; Goodlad, 1984). Goodlad surveyed teachers, parents, and students in 38 schools in 12 districts in the United States, concluding that

> most of the parents we surveyed would take power from the more remote, more impersonal authorities heading the system and place it in the hands of the more visible, more close-at-hand staff of the school and parent groups close to the school. (p. 274)

Despite such evidence, Murphy (1991) has drawn the conclusion that "efforts at reorganization--despite the prevailing rhetoric--often have more to do with politics than with greater efficiency and enhanced quality" (p. 76).

The concepts of school-based management have been criticized on economic grounds. Critics contend that not only is school-based management a dubious concept on the basis of economic rationalist arguments, but that it is also a masquerade behind which serious economic concerns are hidden. According to Hartley (1994),

> It represents an attempt by the state to curb without coercion the level of public expenditure on education at a time of fiscal overload. By appealing to democratic principles using the slogans of choice, ownership and self-management, the state is set to minimize its visibility in order to maximize its control over education. (p. 129)

Nause (1995) cautiously endorsed this view when he stated that "'site-based management' is rooted in the need to save money and not in a sincere desire to improve our education system" (p. 11). Kozolanka (1994) has argued that centralization may actually be a more cost effective option. She also suggested that school-based management may impede efficiency because of the time commitments, and skill and training deficits which have to be overcome in implementing school-based management.

The theoretical underpinnings of school-based management have been criticized on grounds which loosely encompass the social aspects of such underpinnings. Both Watt (1989) and Achilles (1994) have expressed concern about the impact of school-based management in situations of social deprivation. Watt asked,

> In a radically decentralized system, who is to be concerned for the interests of all children and particularly of those whose parents lack the education, the experience and the personal and political power to advance their interests effectively in a deregulated, competitive environment? (p. 27)

Apelt and Lingard (1993) considered that, for public schools, "staying close to their fundamental principles of equity in the interests of social justice, while at the same time embracing competing discourses manifested in the state's demand for a devolved and decentralized system" (p. 69) was a critical dilemma.

Watkins (1993) believed that the emergence of school-based management was one societal response to the crisis occurring in Western capitalist economies. He was concerned that the ideology of the marketplace would place schools in economic and social vacuums. He has observed that "the concept of a self-managing school, in competitive isolation from its neighbouring schools, is driven by the quest for money, power and status on which, in the present economic rationalist environment, its survival depends" (p. 147). Angus (1993), commenting on the removal of school zone boundaries in parts of Britain and Australia, noted that

> this has enabled schools to be placed in relation to each other as competitors in an educational market. Within such a relationship, individual schools will have to compete with other schools for pupils (or market share) in such a way that . . . the more efficiently managed and entrepreneurial schools are likely to be successful. (p. 15)

Critics of school-based management have also identified flaws in the structural elements of the theoretical foundations of the concept. Hurst (1985) has identified three levels of participation which can occur in decentralized environments. Hurst believed that it is important to "distinguish between the kinds of decentralization which masquerade as decentralization from that which genuinely extends the power to take part in making decisions" (p. 80). Hurst identified the three levels as:

1. Information--facts are sought by decision makers.

2. Consultation--views are sought by decision makers without any commitment to using such views.

3. Participation or power-sharing--there is participation in and responsibility for decision making and decisions. (p. 80)

Hurst concluded that "decentralization of the administrative structure does not automatically imply any change from one level of involvement to another" (p. 80). Elmore (1993) adopted a stronger perspective. He stated that

> the idea that school-based management involves decentralization of authority and responsibility to "the school," then, is a convenient fiction masking considerable ambiguity and disagreement over who is the object of decentralization and what decisions are supposed to be made at the school-site level. (p. 45)

Elmore (1992) also questioned the assumed articulation between organizational structure and teaching and learning. He noted that "it may be true that teaching and learning are influenced in important ways by the organization of schooling. It is probably not true, however, that changing the structure of schools will lead reliably to changes in teaching and learning" (p. 44).

The style and location of decision making may, however, mask a more serious aspect which Sackney and Dibski (1994), and Estler (1988), citing Wise (1983), have described as "hyperrationality." Sackney and Dibski noted that "what may happen is that one level of bureaucracy may be juxtaposed on another" (p. 106). The impact of this phenomenon is that "a rational system of decision making . . . gives way to a hyperrational system as added procedures rather than distributed authority becomes the response" (p. 106). This is clearly the antithesis of Caldwell and Spinks' contention of the collapse of bureaucracy.

Emerging Patterns of Influence of School-Based Management

Patterns of influence of school-based management were beginning to emerge from the literature, and these patterns were as confusing as many other facets of the concept. Fullan (1991) concluded that "restructuring efforts such as site-based management have not yet demonstrated that they focus on, let alone alter, the deeper second-order change required for reform" (p. 202), a conclusion also reached by Carlos and Amsler (1993). Wohlstetter and Odden (1992) have concluded that

> when programs are analyzed, the general conclusion is that the extent of decision-making responsibility devolved to the school is limited; consequently, site teachers and administrators have little to manage, particularly with respect to budget, personnel, and curriculum strategies. Thus many studies conclude that SBM has not been much of a change because nothing real has been decentralized--SBM is everywhere and nowhere. (p. 531)

On the other hand, Levin (1992) stated that "it does appear from available evidence that school-based management holds some promise of productive change" (p. 31). Brown (1987), in an early investigation of the pioneering devolutionary moves in Edmonton Public School District, Alberta, and Langley School District, British Columbia, concluded that "flexibility and accountability have been achieved and productivity appears to have increased" (p. 39). Odden and Wohlstetter (1995) reported that "some school districts and some schools are experiencing greater success with school-based management than others" (p. 32). Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz (1990b) noted that "because school-based management is, empirically, an elusive notion, it is extraordinarily difficult to determine the extent to which school-based management plans fundamentally alter formal decision making arrangements" (p. 296). Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz (1990a) also suggested that "perhaps site-based management simply is not an effective approach to education reform. However, it is also possible site-based management has not been given a full or fair test" (p. 59).

Typologies of Influences

Researchers and writers are beginning to construct typologies of influences of school-based management as one method of drawing together the complex array of information which is beginning to emerge about school-based management. The following are examples of such typologies.

Hill and Bonan (1991) examined school-based management in five large urban school districts in North America. They drew the following conclusions:

1. While focusing on individual schools, school-based management is a school system reform.

2. Real changes will only occur at the level of the school site if school-based management is a fundamental reform strategy, rather than one such strategy among several.

3. Distinctive characters, goals, and operating styles will most likely evolve over time in site-managed schools.

4. Systems composed of distinctive, site-managed schools require different forms of accountability.

5. Parental choice is the ultimate accountability mechanism. (p. 65)

Lindquist and Mauriel (1989) examined school-based management implementation in two school districts of the United States. They isolated three kinds of problems that hampered school-based management development in these districts:

1. Conceptual flaws and definitional incongruence.
2. Lack of motivation to delegate authority.
3. Time and skill requirements. (p. 403)

Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz (1990a) examined some 200 documents relating to school-based management attempts in the United States, Canada, and Australia. Overall, they concluded that school-based management was not fulfilling the expectations of proponents. While cautioning that there was little systematic evidence to examine, that the settings were diverse, and that differing versions and dimensions of school-based management had been examined in the documents, they concluded the following as reasons for their perceptions on the basis of the contents of the documents they examined:

1. Little substantial influence on policy.
2. Unclear patterns of authority redistribution.

3. Fleeting morale boosts--affected by lack of time, confusion and anxiety, dissonance and resentment, complex problems, and fiscal restraints.

4. Little impact on planning.

5. Little sustained innovatory impact.

6. Limits to autonomy.

7. Little impact on student achievement. (pp. 32-59)

In contrast from a methodology perspective, Brown (1994) conducted an extended ethnographic analysis of the impact of school-based management in an elementary school in the United States which was in the early stages of implementation of school-based management. The staff of the school perceived that the following were the successful aspects of the processes being implemented; open communications, working collaboratively, establishing common goals, and the sharing of decision making. Among issues raised were; matters of trust, a questioning of the value of collaboration, roles and responsibilities confusion, the challenge of focusing on student needs, and administrative expectations and needs. Lack of time was perceived as the main roadblock to the implementation process, as well as fear of the process, lack of trust, role confusion, hidden agendas, too much control from central office, and lack of teacher support for the process.

David (1989) attempted to synthesize research on school-based management. She concluded that, although school-based management exists in many forms, its essential elements are a combination of school-level autonomy and participative decision-making, and she conducted her review from that perspective. She concluded that the following are benefits of school-based management:

1. Increased teacher satisfaction and professionalism.

2. New arrangements and practices in schools.

3. Despite increased time and energy demands, heightened teacher exuberance (which Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz, 1990a, described as "fleeting," p. 53)

4. Greater differences amongst schools (in contrast with Hartley's expectations of increasing isomorphism). (p. 51)

David's synthesis also identified the following as less beneficial effects:

1. Little evidence of second-order change.
2. The substitution of participation for authority.
3. Problems caused by a lack of strong leadership and support. (pp. 51-52)

Other Emergent Influences

Other writers have identified a range of emergent influences of school-based management. For example, Chapman and Boyd (1986), in examining decentralization in the state of Victoria, Australia, uncovered some preliminary evidence of improvements in educational quality because of increasing levels of analytical skills in school councils.

Weiss (1993) conducted a longitudinal study of 12 high schools in 11 school districts of the United States in respect of shared decision making. Half of the schools were managed in more traditional styles, and the remainder were implementing school-based decision making. She concluded that "if SDM is to lead to significant improvements in teaching and learning, change in the decision-making structure is not enough. On its own, SDM is simply a set of arrangements for teacher participation, a process without a direction" (p. 87).

Malen (1994) used Weiler's conception of political utility to examine some contemporary developments with school-based management. She concluded that

> it is argued that SBM may have considerable political utility in certain contexts. Apart from its capacity to improve organizational performance, SBM may be an efficacious means of addressing the most fundamental political problem: how to manage actual and anticipated conflict over the distribution of scarce resources in ways that enhance the legitimacy of the institutions authorized to make those determinations. (p. 249)

Leadership

It can be noted from the review of the literature that the theoretical basis of school-based management implies realignments in leadership styles at both school and district levels, if meaningful change is to be facilitated. In contrast to other facets of the theory of school-based management, this in fact appears to be borne out in practice. David (1989) determined that

> studies of successful school-based management practices reach the same conclusion. Successful practices have less to do with management details and more to do with the leadership and culture of the district and the morale and material support it offers staff. (p. 5)

Levin (1992) observed that change will be marginalized, if it occurs at all, when principals choose not to share the increased power granted to them. Wong (1994) examined governance reform in four inner city schools in the United States, and noted that "despite the variation in governance reform . . . and despite the perceptions in different leadership styles, principals remain the key to curricular and instructional innovation" (p. 174). However, Wong also noted the diminution of impact on improvement when teachers, parents, and principals were not complementing each others' tasks. In a survey of 139 principals in Hawaii about school-based management, Ganapole (1990) determined that teacher participation in decision-making processes was associated with:

1. The degree to which principals believed that participation is important to student achievement.

2. The degree to which principals were confident that teachers have sufficient skills and knowledge for participation.

3. The degree to which principals believed that authority to make decisions is vested in the school. (p. 8)

The findings of Ganapole were supported by Kowalski (1994). She stated that "principals were more willing to share power in areas where they thought they had substantial power . . . and less where they thought they had limited power" (p. 200).

Moreover, there is research evidence which indicated that the matter of principals' leadership in school reform may be more complex that the rhetoric envisaged. Hallinger, Murphy, and Hausman (1992) studied the perceptions of 15 principals from three states in the United States, and their findings suggested that "even professionals who view themselves as supporters of fundamental reform may be severely limited by their own experience, training, and beliefs in bringing about a new order of schools" (p. 348).

Student Achievement

Brown (1994) posed key questions about school-based management and student achievement:

1. Will there be an impact on the improvement of the learning community in each school?

2. Will the changes proposed and implemented by teachers' decisions within each school actually have an impact on students' needs?

3. Will students acquire the desired outcomes more readily as a result of school-based management? (p. 40)

In attempting to answer his own questions, Brown could find very little evidence in his investigations which would lead to affirmative answers. The evidence emerging from the literature indicated that there is a great deal of ambivalence surrounding the influence of school-based management on student achievement (Peterson, 1991). Ogawa and White (1994) found that "evidence on the efficacy of SBM programs is not compelling. A comprehensive literature review concludes that there is little evidence that SBM has significantly enhanced conditions in schools and districts, or improved students' academic performance" (p. 54). This finding is supported by Bell, Ball, and Esposito (1997), Bunin (1996), Carlos and Amsler (1993), Chubb and Moe (1990), Clune and Witte (1990), Cuendett (1992), Levine and

Eubanks (1992), Lopez (1992), Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz (1990a; 1990b), Mohrman and Wohlstetter (1994), Murphy and Beck (1995), Sackney and Dibski (1994), Summers and Johnson (1995), Taylor and Bogotch (1994).

Conway and Calzi (1995/1996) noted the relative dearth of research about teacher participation and student achievement. However, citing Greenblatt, Cooper, and Muth (1983), they also noted that one study had determined a curvilinear relationship. Where teachers perceived their level of involvement as consultative, teaching quality was higher than in authoritative or highly participative schools. They also cited a study by Weiss (1993) which indicated that heightened authority and collegiality did not translate into an increased emphasis on teaching. Klebacha (1994) conducted case study research into the influence of changing governance patterns in a Florida school district, concluding that "as seen through an evolutionary process, shared decision making has the potential [to] be institutionalized into the organization, and if the basic assumption is correct, may ultimately impact on student performance" (p. 122).

The general thrusts of these findings contrasted with those from the study by Hallinger, Murphy, and Hausman (1992), where principals envisaged that restructuring would bring affective gains for students, including a higher frequency of classroom success. Jenkins, Ronk, Schrag, Rude, and Stowitschek (1994), after undertaking a 3-year study in 23 schools in the state of Washington focused on participative decision making, concluded that teachers held strong perceptions of enhanced program quality. White (1992) studied decentralization in three elementary school districts in the United States, and concluded that "student motivation had increased since teachers were better able to tailor programs to meet the demands of students" (p. 79). Littlefield (1991) conducted a survey with a national sample of teachers and administrators in the United States in districts where school-based management was in place, and concluded that

> areas related to instruction and the learning environment were identified as the most improved as compared to operationally oriented items as a result of SBDM. These areas are within the teachers' domain and the success or failure of proposed changes will ultimately be determined by the teacher. These

> findings seem to indicate that when teachers are involved in instructional improvement plans, they are more likely to be successfully implemented in the classroom. (p. 65)

Wong (1994) has suggested that the dearth of research may be a cause of the apparent gap between perceptions such as those uncovered by Hallinger et al. and others, and the possible realities. He stated that "there is, however, too little empirical research that links governance structures to classroom organization . . . it remains unclear where the new forms of decentralized governance actually improve the use of classroom 'technologies' in the process of producing learners" (p. 154). Wohlstetter, Smyer, and Mohrman (1994) suggested that

> part of the explanation is that improving school performance may be an unrealistic expectation for a *governance* reform that alters the balance of power within educational systems towards schools. A means-end relationship between governance and school improvement is difficult to argue in the absence of some kind of instructional guidance mechanism that sets forth the direction of change with regard to curriculum and instruction, the technical core of schooling. (p. 268, authors' emphasis)

They also found that "the majority of actively restructuring schools did not want to manage the daily operations of the organization beyond what was needed to effect change in teaching and learning" (p. 284).

Bimber (1994) concluded, after a research examination of decentralization in a sample of American schools, that

> the disappointing educational results from decentralization attempts . . . should not be taken as a sign that the principles themselves are flawed. Rather, poor results may reflect only the fact that decentralization efforts have not produced significant changes in constraints on schools--that shifts in decisionmaking authority have been incomplete. (p. 51)

Guskey and Peterson (1995/1996) and Weiss, Cambone, and Wyeth (1992) also noted the lack of evidence linking school-based management and student learning. Guskey and Peterson isolated a series of problems which they contended are the causes:

1. The power problem--there has been no real change in the locus of power and authority.

2. The implementation problem--new organizational forms, and lack of goal clarity and direction are impeding implementation.

3. The ambiguous mission problem--uncertainty exists as to whether teaching and learning or school management should be the focus of school-based management.

4. The time problem.

5. The expertise problem, whereby teachers, parents, and others lack the confidence to participate in school-based management processes.

6. The cultural constraints problem--the long standing non-involvement of teachers and parents in critical areas of management and policy, and teachers' preference for their traditional domain of influence, the classroom, form a set of constraints that impede school-based management.

7. The avoidance problem--for a range of reasons, including complexity, matters affecting teaching and learning are avoided by participants in school-based management processes.

8. The motivation problem--the avoidance of the added responsibilities that can accrue at school level. (pp. 11-12)

Guskey and Peterson have provided a useful typology of the likely problems impeding school-based management implementation, but have not established causal linkages between these problems and student achievement, and have not demonstrated the linkages between these problems and problems of a dearth of empirical data.

Sailor (1991) analyzed relationships between special education and school restructuring endeavors. He noted potentially serious difficulties for special education programs if they remained aloof from changes engendered by initiatives such as school-based management. He concluded that "an opportunity exists to realign all educational systems to work more effectively and efficiently for all children at the school site" (p. 18).

Expectations and the Emerging Realities

> Rhetoric about centralization and decentralization has promised much for reformers have not been shy in their claims. Much of the policy talk is based on different ideologies and interests, either explicitly stated or taken for granted. One period's common sense becomes a delusion in the next. (Tyack, 1993, p. 1)

The patterns of emerging realities of the impact and influence of school-based management are conflicting and confusing. The reasons for this, according to the literature, vary from conceptual flaws, poor implementation, and the localized nature of the concept, to inadequate research and premature evaluation. Chapman and Boyd (1986) made the following observation,

> Those who have studied administrative reorganization in government agree that such efforts rarely achieve success in terms of the usual goals of increased efficiency, effectiveness or responsiveness. . . . Yet, the usually limited success of reorganization efforts in terms of their professed goals does not mean they are useless. These nevertheless may have both significant short-term and long-run effects. (p. 50)

This section examines emerging realities in the light of the expectations held for school-based management.

The rhetoric about school-based management has been placed in relief by Delaney (1994), who, taking a perspective similar to Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz (1990b), stated that

> school-based management is not a panacea for solving all educational problems. Neither is it the "be all and end all" for reforming our schools into more effective institutions of learning. However, it does represent one way of involving all stakeholders in an ongoing attempt to make schools better. (p. 26)

Fullan (1991) also observed that "successful innovations and reforms are usually clear after they work, not in advance" (p. xi). He further observed that "change must always be viewed in relation to the particular values, goals, and outcomes it serves. This is frequently difficult to assess in education because rhetoric differs from reality and consequently cannot easily be determined or measured" (p. 8).

Even in the light of these viewpoints, there are clear indications in the literature that differences between the rhetoric and the reality of school-based management are extensive. Levin (1992) has concluded that "the evidence does not suggest that SBM . . . will always, or even often, result in significant changes in educational goals or practice" (p. 31). Wohlstetter and Odden (1992) observed that "researchers have often concluded that SBM did not change authority relationships significantly largely because little power was offered and few governance changes were made. In short, the reach of SBM rhetoric has often been much greater than its substance" (p. 533). These conclusions were echoed by Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz (1990a) as an outcome of their analysis of extensive documentation of school-based management in three countries. They stated that "we must conclude site-based management in most instances does not achieve its stated objectives" (p. 30). Mohrman and Wohlstetter (1994) also concluded that "even though approximately one-third of the nation's school districts have SBM programs, there remains scant evidence in the research literature that conditions in schools, let alone student performance, have improved" (p. 168). David (1989) noted that there were limited examples of second-order change in the literature, although she also attributed this finding to the lack of empirical data and the newness of initiatives. Schlechty (1993), after extensive observations of school-based management in schools and districts in the United States, reached the conclusion that

> unless specific attention is given to improving the quality of decisions, the only certain result of changing the composition of decision-making groups or relocating the site of decision making is that more and different people will be happy with the decisions made--however bad and stupid the decision may be. (p. 21)

Elmore (1993) claimed that research evidence has shown a "complete dissonance" (p. 35) between restructuring, classroom instruction, and learning. He also identified a further concern resulting from the accumulating detritus of reform,

> Because the process of centralization and decentralization is cyclical, and because each cycle leaves behind some vestiges of its reforms, the cumulative effect of several cycles of reform is to make the educational system more complex, less accessible to its clients, less comprehensive to those who work in

> it, and therefore less manageable, even though each reform, taken by itself, is predicated on the assumption that it alone will make the system simple, more comprehensive, and more manageable. (p. 35)

Elmore's perspective contrasted with that of Estler (1988), noted previously, of the positive influences of an accumulating knowledge and experience base about participative processes.

There are attempts in the literature to reach understandings of the reasons for the perplexing outcomes of experiences with school-based management thus far (e.g., Conway & Calzi, 1995/1996; David, 1989; Fullan, 1991; Guskey & Peterson, 1995/1996; Mohrman & Wohlstetter, 1994; Peterson, 1991; Prasch, 1990).

Lindelow and Heynderickx (1989) believed that "the biggest stumbling block in implementing school-based management is breaking down the conventions that people hold about what should or can be" (p. 134). Brown (1987) suggested that technical matters increasingly occupied principals at the expense of curricular matters. Peterson (1991), citing Ogletree and McHenry (1990), observed that "school-based management teams cannot be faulted for failing to increase student performance if they are not given the authority to address that task" (p. 3).

Levine and Eubanks (1989), cited by Fullan (1991), have determined six major obstacles to school-based management:

1. Inadequate time, training, and technical assistance.

2. Difficulties of stimulating consideration and adaptation of inconvenient change.

3. Unresolved issues involving administrative leadership on the one hand and enhanced power among participants on the other.

4. Constraints on teacher participation in decision-making.

5. Reluctance of administrators at all levels to give up traditional prerogatives.

6. Restrictions imposed by school board, state, and federal regulations and by agreements with teacher organizations. (p. 201)

Levine and Eubanks concluded that "perhaps it is no surprize that research-to-date generally has reported conclusions that appear to be more neutral and disappointing than positive and encouraging" (p. 201).

Emerging Realities and the School Site

The implementation of school-based management in attempting school-level reform impacts school culture (e.g., Brown, 1994). Cross and Reitzug (1995/1996) observed such changes in six schools in three midwest United States school districts. They gleaned the following from their research:

1. Parent involvement must be real.
2. Current relationships in the school should be open to challenge.
3. Traditional or destructive relationships should be removed.
4. A climate of trust must be built.
5. Meaningful staff involvement must be created.
6. Sufficient time must be allowed. (pp. 16-19)

Crosby (1991) surveyed teachers' opinions about school-based management in 60 Chicago elementary schools, finding that the majority of the teachers believed that, under mandated school-based management processes, there had been improvements in instructional strategies and instruction, curriculum, collaboration, an increase in teacher autonomy, and a reduction in teacher isolation. However, in contrast, Radnofsky (1994), using a sample of 30 teachers from the Chicago public school system to examine the effects of mandated school-based management, found that most chose to opt out of involvement in school management, and preferred their traditional realm of influence and authority, the classroom.

A recent study by Bell, Ball, and Esposito (J. Esposito, personal communication, 10 January, 1997) has provided some insights into the influence of school-based management at school sites. Thirty-five randomly selected elementary schools in Virginia, identified as school-based managed, representing 9% of such identified schools in that state, formed the sample used in the study. Principals responded to questions in the areas of budget and administration, personnel, and curriculum and instruction, from which an index of teacher involvement and participation in decision making was devised. The index was correlated with 4th grade standardized test scores over three years in an attempt to determine the extent to which school-based management contributed to the variability of scores. After controlling for school size, per-student expenditure, and the socioeconomic status of students, the researchers concluded that school-based management was not an important contributing factor to variability in test scores. They also cautioned that there was considerable variation in implementation, even though the term school-based management was commonly applied to the processes being implemented.

Cheung and Cheng (1996), after examining the literature, posited that school-based management is a cyclic process (see Figure 2.1).

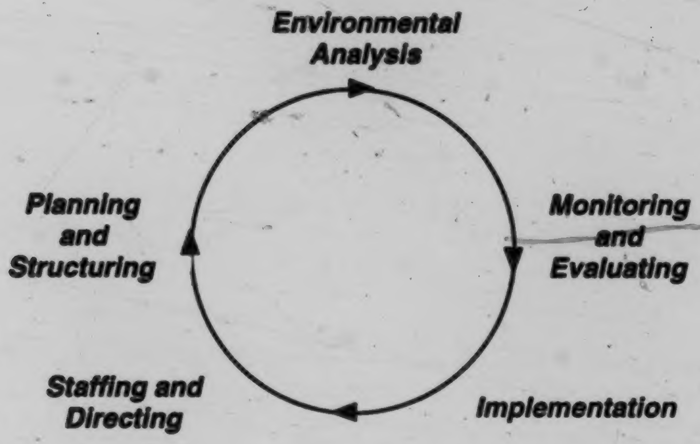

Environmental Analysis
Monitoring and Evaluating
Implementation
Staffing and Directing
Planning and Structuring

FIGURE 2.1

Self-management cycle at school level
Adapted from Cheung and Cheng (1996)

While acknowledging the relevance of environments and influences external to the school, Cheung and Cheng concluded that, when implemented in ways which reflected a meaningful commitment to school-level decision making, the process is multidimensional, occurring at school, group, and individual level in a context of constant, ongoing interaction (see Figure 2.2).

They concluded that

> it seems that in order to accomplish effective self-management in school, a certain degree of consistency in the functioning of the self-management cycles across the three levels is essential. This may include consistency in school mission, group direction and individual goals; the work procedures formulated at school level and those at the group and individual levels; the directions of staff development across the three levels; and the pace of implementation of educational programs. (pp. 23-24)

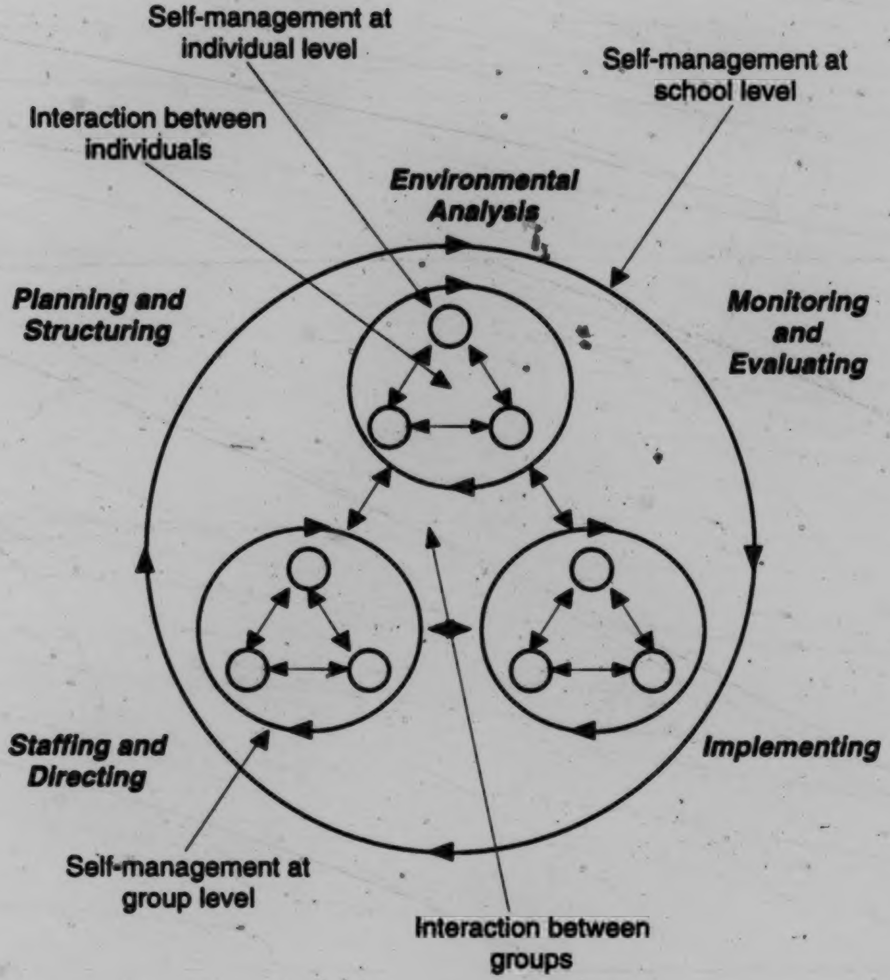

Self-management at individual level
Self-management at school level
Interaction between individuals
Environmental Analysis
Planning and Structuring
Monitoring and Evaluating
Staffing and Directing
Implementing
Self-management at group level
Interaction between groups

FIGURE 2.2

School self-management cycle at various levels
Adapted from Cheung and Cheng (1996)

This interpretation of one form of impact of school-based management is indicative that some school-based management processes have some potential to effect the second-order changes as conceptualized by Fullan (1991). Further, it endorsed Altieri's (1993) observation about school-based management entailing collaboration, conflict management, and continual reconceptualization. It also addressed Hurst's (1985) and Bimber's (1993) concerns about superficial decentralization and genuine power sharing.

Resource Diversion

In their analysis of devolution in Victoria, Australia, Chapman and Boyd (1986) perceived the diversion of resources, including human resources, from the teaching and learning processes to administration as the major problem arising from devolutionary processes. They concluded that

> the difficulty for the principal was that on one hand devolution reduced the teaching resource of the school, but on the other hand it made the principal more accountable to a local community that ultimately would judge the school by the quality of its educational product. (p. 45)

Classroom Influence

If there was a consistent and coherent theme in the rhetoric associated with school-based management, it was that there will be educational dividends for students as a key outcome of the process. However, evidence in the literature to support this contention was elusive, although King, Louis, Marks, and Peterson (1996) considered that, while such dividends are not accrued automatically, participatory decision making was facilitative of better quality teaching and learning. However, the general thrust of the literature was captured by Hess (1992),

> However it is measured, one primary criterion for the success of school reform efforts is the effect on student achievement. To date, there is little evidence that school-based management, in any of its manifestations, can be directly linked to improvement in student achievement. (p. 167)

As has been noted, Hess' view was an increasingly common theme in the literature. These views may be a reflection of serious problems of ambiguity surrounding the influence of school-based management rather than being indicative of a clear conclusion. However, the real problem may be found in the ways in which such outcomes are determined. Brown (1990) drew the following conclusion,

> Either the methodological difficulties to date have been so great as to not permit research to provide answers to the question of how schools produce learning, or the problem may actually be one which cannot be solved by using research methods which aim at general knowledge applicable across many schools. (p. 38)

Ogletree and McHenry (1990), in a study undertaken with 100 teachers in 10 Chicago schools, the data from which confounded that obtained by Crosby (1991) and contributed to the obfuscation surrounding school-based management outcomes, found that in the mandated school-based management environment of that school district, no gains were made in student achievement, school discipline, teacher morale, collegiality, school climate, teacher involvement in decision making, and in job satisfaction. The claim was made in the study that "the classroom is ignored" (p. 4). Commenting on the outcomes of this study, Peterson (1991) observed trenchantly that "it is unfair to expect any school reform to have an effect in urban areas wracked by violence, crime, and poverty" (p. 3).

Conceptual Frameworks

The review of the literature has revealed a range of propositions which jointly and separately served to form appropriate conceptual frameworks which generally underpinned the study, and which helped to focus facets of the research elements of the study.

Conceptual Propositions

1. School-based management, while not a new concept, is an increasingly common phenomenon of the educational landscape of many schools and school districts in different parts of the world.

2. While the genesis of school-based management is unclear, it emanates from a confluence of succeeding waves of school reform, philosophical perspectives about

organizational and educational change, and a range of social, historical, political, and economic factors.

3. Definitional translucency and contestation surround school-based management. The phenomenon is interpreted and implemented in very diverse ways, varying from school to school, and from district to district.

4. Extensive arrays of outcomes are attributed to school-based management, frequently proleptically, and often in the absence of substantive evidence that such attributions are justified. The enhancement of school programs and student achievement are frequent such attributions.

5. School-based management is a process, not a product. The phenomenon is dynamic and subject to ongoing reconceptualization, and is enmeshed in a gamut of other change processes influencing schools and school systems.

6. Slowly emerging evidence of the impact and influence of school-based management provides an incomplete and somewhat incoherent picture, possibly reflecting the definitional and implementational diversity of the phenomenon, the unsubstantiated claims made for school-based management not being borne out in reality, and the nature and focus of the research itself.

7. There is a need to reach researched understandings of the nature and influences of the concept and processes as implemented, to begin to decipher the emerging evidence of the phenomenon's impact and influence, and to understand why such evidence may vary from the attributions for school-based management.

8. More specifically, the evidence that school-based management influences the quality of school programs and student achievement is limited, and that which is available is inconsistent and incoherent.

Summary

The contents of this chapter represent a brief analysis of a sample of a large and rapidly growing literature bank about school-based management. The nature of the concept of school-based management has been examined, some of the claims made for it have been explored, facets of implementation have been perused, and some outcomes, influences, and impacts have been canvassed. These have yielded conceptual frameworks which served, in part, to cluster and focus the study's research design. The general conclusions can be safely drawn that school-based management is a complex process which is widely employed in many schools and districts, and for which there are high expectations. Figure 2.3 illustrates the complex and interactive nature of the phenomenon as described in the literature, representing the underpinning principles and influences shaping school-based management in the three more commonly devolved areas, and illustrating examples of presumed outcomes of the phenomenon. However, the evidence of the influence of the process is also complex and presents a very unclear picture. David (1995/1996) suggested that

> one risk is that the public will judge site-based management prematurely on the ultimate goals, derailing sound practices whose success is not yet reflected in test scores. When there is more than one desired end and the means to those ends are not clear it is difficult to assess progress along the way. Therefore, it is vitally important to devise ways of measuring progress for such an undertaking. (p. 9)

Research approaches to assessing such progress in one school district in Alberta are examined in Chapter 3.

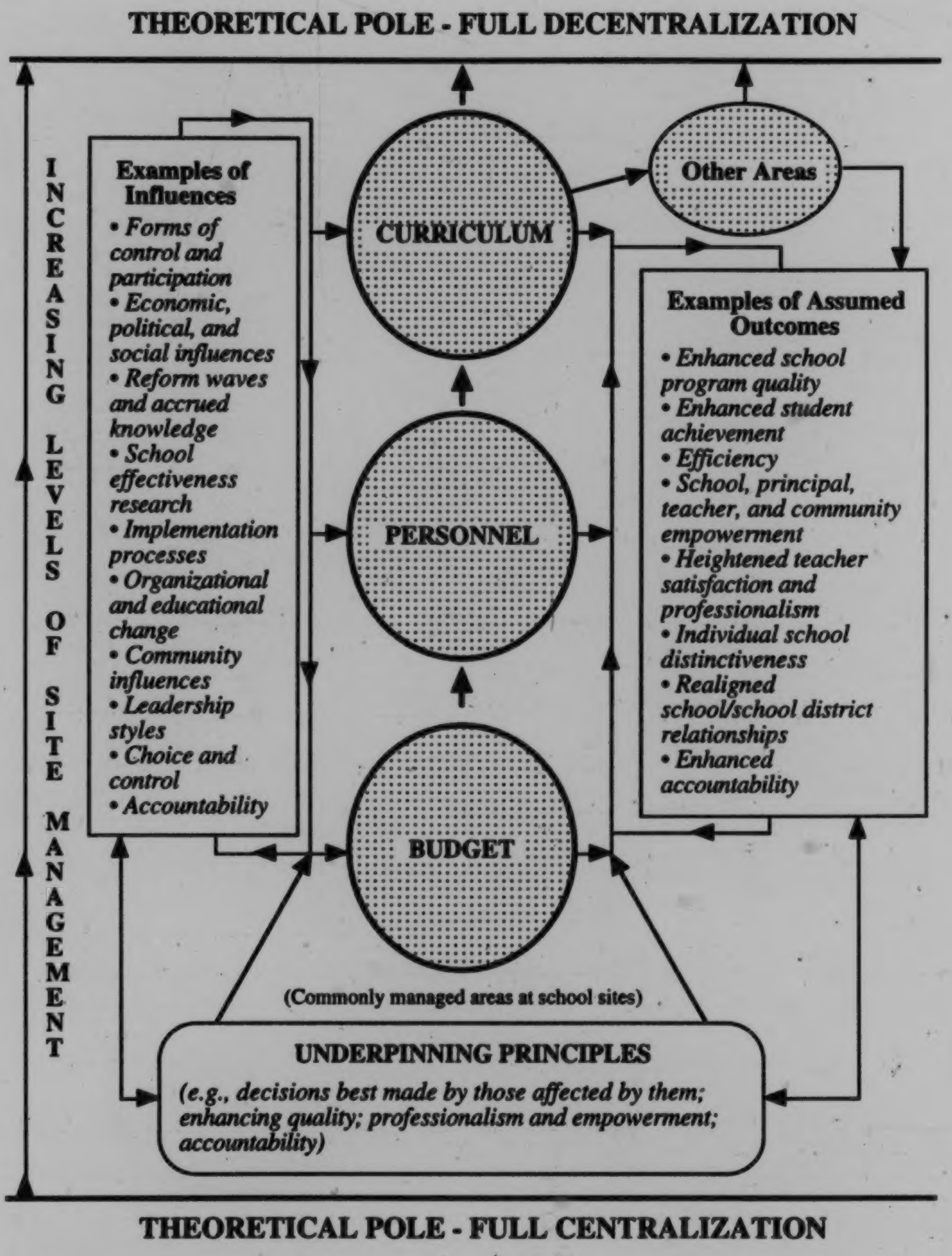

THEORETICAL POLE - FULL DECENTRALIZATION
INCREASING LEVELS OF SITE MANAGEMENT
Examples of Influences
• Forms of control and participation
• Economic, political, and social influences
• Reform waves and accrued knowledge
• School effectiveness research
• Implementation processes
• Organizational and educational change
• Community influences
• Leadership styles
• Choice and control
• Accountability
CURRICULUM
PERSONNEL
BUDGET
Other Areas
Examples of Assumed Outcomes
• Enhanced school program quality
• Enhanced student achievement
• Efficiency
• School, principal, teacher, and community empowerment
• Heightened teacher satisfaction and professionalism
• Individual school distinctiveness
• Realigned school/school district relationships
• Enhanced accountability
(Commonly managed areas at school sites)
UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES
(e.g., decisions best made by those affected by them; enhancing quality; professionalism and empowerment; accountability)
THEORETICAL POLE - FULL CENTRALIZATION

FIGURE 2.3

Conceptualization of the general nature and processes of school-based management

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research strategies employed in this study are examined in this chapter. The research design and its underpinning methodological principles, assumptions, and perspectives are discussed in some detail. Matters of trustworthiness, pilot processes, and ethical issues are canvassed. The chapter concludes with an explication of the delimitations, limitations, and assumptions which may have influenced the study and its associated research design.

The information provided in this chapter and that which follows is presented with several key purposes in mind. First, the review of the literature clearly indicated that the influence and impact of school-based management presented in a somewhat incoherent form in the literature, and that application of the phenomenon is very frequently unique to particular schools and school districts. Consequently, appropriate detail is required to enable consumers of the research to make judgements about the achievement of the study's purposes, and to make a rational analysis of the study's contribution to clarifying the picture of influence and impact emerging from the confusing data in the literature. Second, the details provided may guide and assist follow-up and replication studies. Third, the standards of trustworthiness established for the study demanded, among other requirements, that clear auditability be maintained. The information provided in this and subsequent chapters contributed to the study's auditability.

Focus of the Study

The research tasks, as stated in Chapter 1, were to examine the perceptions held by principals and school district administrators about relationships between school-based management, the quality of school programs and student achievement, and why such perceptions were held.

An examination of a sample of an extensive literature enabled the derivation of eight broad conceptual propositions about which the study was generally clustered, and which served as a generative structure for the research design of the study.

Type of Study

Yin (1989) has observed that "in the most elementary sense, the design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's critical research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions" (p. 28). Patton (1990) also observed that "any given design is necessarily an interplay of resources, possibilities, creativity, and personal judgements by the people involved" (p.13). The research design of this study blended Yin's stream of logic with the broad design elements identified by Patton.

The research design of the study was both influenced by and cast in a coherentist mode, using elements of a case study format in a field situation, and with instrumentation drawn from various research perspectives. The study was non-experimental, and focused on exploring, describing, and analyzing data obtained through the administration of a questionnaire to principals in an Alberta school district, the conduct of semistructured interviews with a purposive sample of respondents drawn from the cohort of principals and from senior district administrators, and the conduct of a document survey and analysis.

Context of the Research Design

Coherentist perspectives provided, in the view of the researcher, an appropriate basis by which the judgements suggested by Patton could be translated into research design processes and outcomes. The theoretical considerations and debate informing such perspectives are examined in this section.

Some Contemporary Contexts of Educational Research

> The worst thing that could happen in educational research is for all inquiry to proceed from a single normative perspective (or even from a limited few perspectives). Part of the generative value of doing inquiry comes from not being trapped into thinking in one way, using one method, or proceeding as if one perspective is best. (Short, 1993, p. 9)

That the world of educational research has been riven with disputation rooted in powerful divisions about philosophical perspectives of research is a reality of life in that world in contemporary times. Patton (1990) commented that "philosophers of science and methodologists have been engaged in a long-standing epistemological debate about how best to conduct research" (p. 37). Reinharz (1990) noted that such disputation is frequently expressed in "military and social movement metaphors" (p. 293), although Guba and Lincoln (1994) believed that the use of such metaphors "paints the matter as more confrontational than necessary" (p. 116). Notwithstanding, the debate has been dominant and pervasive. However, Short encapsulated succinctly an eclectic perspective which is appearing more frequently in the literature and which appears to be a development attributable, in part at least, to the paradigm debates.

The Purposes of Educational Research

In seeking to understand the nature of the schism that has so preoccupied educational research, it is helpful to disengage from the minutiae of the debate, and focus on the critical question of what is the purpose of educational research. Donmoyer (1990) observed that "the purpose of research is simply to expand the range of interpretations available to the research consumer" (p. 194). While Donmoyer may have used deliberate understatement to emphasize the need for a bedrock of available knowledge, his was also a timely reminder of the importance of actively seeking knowledge to inform understanding. Eisner (1991) also observed that

> knowledge is not an inert material discovered through research, it is a functioning aspect of human cognition, a resource that lives in biographies, thoughts, and actions of individuals, not something that one can stockpile and point to. To be known, someone must act upon it. In short, knowledge is a verb. (p. 210)

While Eisner is an advocate of the qualitative school, and purists at the extremity of the traditional research perspective would most likely take issue with facets of his view, it is difficult to envisage that contemporary researchers would truly disagree with the spirit of research captured by him. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) observed that "'good research is good research' and that whatever model significant research follows, it will capitalize on the wonderful flexible capacity of the human mind" (p. 1).

Quantitative and Qualitative Research

There is little need to dwell at length on the nature of the schools of research thought embroiled in the debate and which are generally, if loosely and possibly less than accurately, identified as quantitative and qualitative research. The broad descriptions offered by Merriam (1988) are sufficient for the purposes of this discussion. She stated that "traditional research is based on the assumption that there is a single, objective reality--the world out there--that we can observe, know, and measure. . . . From a research perspective, this worldview holds the nature of reality to be constant" (p. 17), while "qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities--that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring" (p. 17). Reichardt and Cook (1979) identified what they termed "shopping lists of attributes" (p. 9) of each,

> The quantitative paradigm is said to have a positivistic, hypothetico-deductive, particularistic, objective, outcome-oriented, and natural science world view. In contrast, the qualitative paradigm is said to subscribe to a phenomenological, inductive, holistic, subjective, process-oriented, and social anthropological world view. (pp. 9-10)

They also noted two assumptions of these paradigmatic characterizations. First, that each paradigm is inextricably linked to a method-type, and second, that the paradigms are rigid and that researchers must choose between them.

The Nature and Some Effects of Paradigmatic Tensions

If there is some agreement about the broad purpose of educational research, and by attempting to ignore the overheated rhetoric at times associated with the debate, it is possible to uncover other factors which contribute to this philosophical chasm in educational research.

The observation by Short at the commencement of this discussion was not merely a truism, rather it pointed to a key feature of the debate that the nature of the paradigms are both frequently assumed and believed to be fundamentally different. Patton (1990) observed that "paradigms are deeply embedded in the socialization of adherents and practitioners. Paradigms tell them what is important, legitimate and reasonable" (p. 37). Paradigmatic loyalty and adherence influence the nature of research, for, as Erlandson et al. (1993) observed, "the prescriptive nature of current social work conceptualizations of science as embodied in the preferred forms of research design and methodology, effectively determine the nature of practice rather than allowing practice to determine the form of scientific inquiry" (p. 6).

Adherence and paradigmatic rigidity, beyond determining the nature of research practice, also contain the genesis of a major flaw in that reflexiveness is almost certainly inhibited. Patton (1990) noted that

> paradigms are also normative, telling the practitioner what to do without the necessity of long existential or epistemological considerations. But it is this aspect of paradigms that constitutes both their strength and their weakness--their strength in that it makes action possible, their weakness in that the very reason for action is hidden in the unquestioned assumptions of the paradigm. (p. 37)

Lincoln (1990) perceived this phenomenon as being very powerful, observing that

> the adoption of a paradigm literally permeates every act even tangentially associated with the enquiry, such that any consideration even remotely attached to inquiry processes demands rethinking to bring decisions into line with the worldview embodied in the paradigm itself. (p. 81)

Further, the picture is made more complicated by the belief of some writers that even the term paradigm itself is somewhat ambiguous (Guba, 1990; Keeves, 1988).

Guba concluded that "I believe it is important to leave the term in such a problematic limbo, because it is then possible to reshape it as our understanding of its many implications improves. Having the term not cast in stone is intellectually useful" (p 17).

Howe (1992), in his analysis of the debate, noted that there are other important effects of paradigmatic rigidity and adherence. He discussed the nature and influence of what he termed *disjunctive eclecticism,* whereby researchers are not constrained in operating within a particular paradigm, and *methodological imperialism,* whereby one paradigm is adopted as superior. Howe's categorizations were insightful in that they made plain not only some influences of rigidity and adherence, but also in emphasizing the assumption that each paradigm excluded the other. However, Howe took his analysis a further step by delineating what he termed *literal* and *derivative contrasts* between paradigms. The former have to do with the procedures and techniques of research, the latter with broader issues which are epistemological in nature. Howe detected a level of coherency in literal contrasts in that they are generally overt, easy to examine, and that mutual exclusivity is not always present, but believed that derivative contrasts remain incoherent. This distinction is an important one, for such incoherency must contribute to the mystification of the opposing schools of epistemological thought and would, therefore, do little to ease rigidity and adherence.

Emergent Perspectives

There is, however, increasing questioning that such derivative contrasts are, in reality, the bulwarks that has been assumed. Reichardt and Cook (1979) asked, "are qualitative procedures necessarily grounded, exploratory, and inductive whereas quantitative procedures are always ungrounded, confirmatory, and deductive?" (p. 13). In some of their earlier writings, Guba and Lincoln (1981) also observed that "it is frequently argued that the difference between the scientific paradigm and naturalistic paradigm is more apparent than real and that a compromise position should be devised to take advantage of their complementarity" (p. 76). Similarly, Patton (1990) noted that "because quantitative and qualitative methods involve differing strengths and weaknesses, they constitute alternative, but not mutually exclusive, strategies for research" (p. 2). According to Miles and Huberman (1994),

> scores of postpositivists are using naturalistic and phenomenological approaches. At the same time, an increasing number of interpretively oriented ethnographers are using predesigned conceptual frames and instruments, especially when dealing with multiple cases. Few postpositivists will dispute the validity and importance of subjective meanings, and few phenomenologists still practice pure hermeneutics. (p. 4)

They also observed that "no study conforms exactly to a standard methodology; each calls for the researcher to bend the methodology to the peculiarities of the setting" (p. 5). Eisner (1991) and Skrtic (1990) endorsed this view also. Eisner noted that

> all empirical phenomena are qualitative. The difference between "qualitative enquiry" and "quantitative research" pertains mainly to the forms of representation that are emphasized in presenting a body of work. The difference is not that one addresses qualities and the other does not. (p. 5)

What are also clearly emerging in these reconceptualizations are responses to the influences of both literal and derivative contrasts. At the level of procedures and techniques, the coherency identified by Howe is being exploited in some research in the interests of particular knowledge, while the incoherency associated with derivative contrasts is at least being better understood, if not diminished, through further examinations of the nature of the epistemological barriers. Perhaps Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) conceptualization of "blurred genres" (p. 9) in respect of qualitative research has some application in this context also.

Walker (1991) also concluded that "educational researchers . . . are increasingly recognizing not just the desirability of rapprochement between adherents of different research traditions . . . but the methodological need for more coherent and if possible integrated first-order methodology within and across traditions" (p. 510).

Thus, by moving away from the unnatural limitations to research approaches imposed by the qualitative-quantitative conundrum, and by focusing more on research outcomes, coherentist perspectives can accommodate a mix of research methods and, more importantly, perhaps stimulate dialogue about epistemological concerns.

Operational dimensions of this approach have been clarified by Patton (1990),

> The advantages of a quantitative approach is that it is possible to measure the reactions of a great many people to a limited set of questions, thus facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of data. This gives a broad generalizable set of findings presented succinctly and parsimoniously. By contrast, qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people. This increases understanding of the cases and situations but reduces generalizability. (p. 14)

Additionally, Miles and Huberman (1994), citing Rossman and Wilson (1984; 1991), suggested further reasons for employing a method mix, "(a) to enable confirmation or corroboration of each other via triangulation; (b) to elaborate or develop analysis, providing richer detail; and (c) to initiate new lines of thinking through attention to surprises or paradoxes, 'turning ideas around,' providing fresh insight" (p. 41).

Challenges to Coherentist Perspectives

The emergence of coherentist perspectives in no way assumes that pragmatic or philosophical tensions have evaporated. For example, Eisner and Peshkin (1990b) noted that "in the encounter between quantitative and qualitative researchers . . . the politics of method emerged that continues less robust but unabated to the present time. It involved, as politics always does, power, resources, control, policy making and personnel" (p. 2). Greenfield (1993) challenged the conceptualization of eclecticism in educational research, or more precisely, he challenged what he termed "the easy denial of conflicting modes of enquiry" (p. 176). The danger that Greenfield saw was that "it encourages the researcher not just to select a paradigm, but to make a patchwork melding of divergent methodologies and conflicting epistemological assumptions. Ultimately it reasserts the dominance of the empiricist paradigm of enquiry" (p. 177). Lincoln (1990) warned of the possibility of a form of "discursive incoherence" (p. 81) emerging which results in the production of research findings of no value to any perspective.

Greenfield's and Lincoln's admonishments are sobering, although the research waters have not calmed sufficiently for any realistic assessment of the emergence of these possibilities to be made. Perhaps Phillip's (1990) assurance is appropriate in considering this concern, "when we abandon foundationalism, we abandon the assurance that we know when we have reached the truth but . . . we do not have to abandon the notion of truth, and we do not have to abandon the view that some types of inquiries are better than others" (pp. 22-23).

The Study in a Coherentist Context

The emergent coherentist perspectives are having some influence in the field of educational research. Proponents are struggling to bring shape to the amorphous nature of the perspectives, a task made more difficult by both the burgeoning array of qualitative strategies, and by contestation within the qualitative domain. The future of coherentist perspectives is difficult to discern, and there is no way of knowing whether an enduring or transitory phenomenon facilitating a new era of emancipatory research is occurring. Eisner (1991) observed that "I do not believe in 'last words' in human affairs, only better conversations" (p. 7). The methodology of the research design of this study is influenced by coherentist perspectives in the interests of better conversations about school-based management, a phenomenon which does not appear initially to be theoretically and philosophically complex yet the outcomes of which are proving in practice to be complex, diverse, and confounding of facets of the phenomenon's theoretical and philosophical underpinnings.

Research Design Orientation

The broad parameters of the research design are examined in this section.

Research Focus and Methodology

In adopting a coherentist methodological perspective, cognizance needed to be taken of the contestation, uncertainty, and imprecision which characterize the emergent and uncertain nature of the perspective. Clearly, an appropriate articulation and alignment was necessary between the focus and purposes of the research and its methodological basis. The literature provided some useful guidance for establishing such articulation and alignment.

Miles and Huberman (1994) clearly advocated a pragmatic perspective. They commented that "the issue is not quantitative-qualitative at all, but whether we are taking an 'analytic' approach to understanding a few controlled variables, or a 'systematic' approach to understanding the interaction of variables in a complex environment" (p. 41). Keeves (1988) summarized the pragmatic element in this way,

> It would seem that because educational and social research are concerned with responses to both the learning of ideas and the meaning ascribed to those ideas, and together form a domain inevitably subjected to constant change, there is room in such research for a variety of methods, a range of theories, models of different types and different procedures of analysis. (p. 28)

Keeves also made the important observation that "the purposes and functions of research lie in the outcomes to be achieved from the research rather than the foundations of the research" (p. 28). Keeves, clearly, was not advocating a quantitative, outcomes-oriented approach, and nor was he suggesting that ends justify means. Rather, he was focusing on outcomes in terms of overall contributions to knowledge growth and understandings. Reichardt and Cook (1979) also concluded that

> there is no need to choose a research method on the basis of a traditional paradigmatic stance. Nor is there any reason to pick between two polar-opposite paradigms. Thus, there is no need for a dichotomy between the method-types and there is every reason (at least in logic) to use them together to satisfy the demands of evaluation research in the most efficacious manner. (p. 510)

The type of study and the instrumentation developed in it reflected articulation and alignment between the underpinning methodology and the focus and purposes of the research, and the nature of the instrumentation deemed appropriate to the research.

Perceptions and Educational Research

The complex nature of perceptions and their "pervasive, pursuasive power" (Johnson, 1987, p. 206) was examined briefly in Chapter 1. Johnson also examined the influences of perceptions on research design and implementation. He concluded that

> researchers' own perceptions shape their theories about life in educational organizations, prompting them to regard certain kinds of activities and ideas as worthy of study, bias their selections among available methodological techniques, and influence the data they collect from educators and other stakeholders. (pp. 219-220)

The nature of research being implemented can also influence the utility of perceptual analyses being undertaken. LeCompte and Preissle (1993), in an examination of qualitative analysis techniques in respect of perceptions, noted that "experimental and quasiexperimental researchers attend only to variables they designate a priori as the focus of the study or which they specified in advance of data collection. Other factors are considered post hoc, when unexpected results obtain" (p. 240). On the other hand, they noted in respect of ethnographic research that "all the factors composing or influencing the phenomena are noteworthy" (p. 240).

Additionally, Johnson believed that the phenomenon of varying perceptions of the same event between individuals had implications for research design. "Hence educational practitioners and researchers would do well to draw on a variety of perspectives and to recognize the limitations of their own and others' perceptions when forming impressions and making decisions" (p. 210).

Research and School Production Functions

Greenhalgh (1984) observed that "when administered on a decentralized basis, each school develops its own production function" (p. 11). An important tenet of school-based management is that student achievement will be enhanced in school-based management environments, and consequently the concepts of school and student production functions have received some attention in the literature. Critical questions arising from this tenet included how and why student learning is or may be enhanced in such environments, and how such enhancement is demonstrated.

It is becoming clear that providing answers to these questions involves matters of some complexity. Sackney and Dibski (1994) noted that

> looking first at student learning, the relationship between SBM and learning achievements is not at all clear. According to the production function model, one should be able to gain an understanding about how changes or variances in the inputs and processes of production affect output. . . . Unfortunately, the decisions about inputs and processes are made largely in a vacuum of ignorance about what the impact might be on student learning. (p. 107)

Elmore (1993) endorsed this viewpoint, stating that "research on centralization and decentralization in American education is characterized by the virtually complete disconnection between structural reform and anything having to do with classroom instruction or the learning of students" (p. 35). He perceived this situation as so serious as to potentially negate much of the impact of structural reforms,

> This disconnection between structural reform and the core technology of schooling means that major reforms can wash over the educational system, consuming large amounts of scarce resources--money; time; the energy of parents, teachers and administrators; the political capital of elected officials--without having any discernible effect on what students learn in schools. (p. 35)

Whether or not this phenomenon is occurring with the school-based management movement is proving a very elusive determination to make (Hess, 1992).

The complexity of establishing causal linkages between school-based management and student achievement is most certainly contributing to this lack of evidence. Sackney and Dibski (1994) reached the following conclusion,

> To date, educational theory and productivity studies provide some optimism but no certainty about the complex relationships that exist among input, process, and output variables. Therefore, arguments supporting school-based budgeting and decision-making as means of improving student learning are at best speculative. (p. 107)

They further concluded that

> the real challenge and test for SBM is to see if it does produce the types of changes in educational inputs and processes that result in enhanced and improved learning outcomes. Until this connection can be shown, educators must continue to justify SBM on outcomes other than improved student learning. (p. 108)

In contrast, Chubb (1990) noted that there has been a reorientation of research away from production functions, "an unspecified process that somehow converts economic inputs into educational outputs" (p. 227), toward the production process itself. Chubb concluded that an abundance of evidence was demonstrating "that school organization may hold the key to school performance" (p. 228).

This study did not specifically seek to explore the relationship between school-based management and school production functions. However, the researcher was cognizant that some writers did anticipate some degree of causality between the two, and considered any such causal indications if they became evident in the study.

Instrumentation

The Case Study Context

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) have commented that "the goal of research is a search for truth" (p. 315). In seeking that goal, this study used elements of a case study approach in a field setting to explore and describe facets of the phenomenon of school-based management, also bearing in mind LeCompte and Preissle's observation that "there are different kinds of truth and that there are different degrees of truth within and across kinds" (p. 315).

The appropriateness of case study methodologies was summarized by Yin (1989), who, citing Schramm (1971), stated that "the essence of a case study . . . is that it tries to illuminate a decision or a set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result" (pp. 22-23). Yin also clarified the appropriate context for using case studies, observing that "in general, case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p. 13). Merriam (1988) noted that "case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis" (p. 10).

In this study, data were gathered through (a) questionnaires administered to all principals in an Alberta school district; (b) semistructured interviews conducted with a purposive sample of principals drawn from the same school district cohort, and with a purposive sample of school district administrators; and (c) a document survey and analysis.

Questionnaire

Rationale

The use of a questionnaire, as a self-reporting instrument, was based on a number of assumptions. Wolf (1988) observed that there are three such assumptions. They are that (a) respondents can understand the questions posed, (b) possess the information required to respond to the questions, and (c) they are willing to respond in an honest manner.

Biddle and Anderson (1986) noted that "questionnaires are probably the cheapest way of acquiring data concerning the beliefs, attitudes, or concerns of a sample of persons" (p. 232). A broad interpretation of this view encompassed an understanding that the questionnaire is an efficient, cost effective, and convenient means of gathering such data. Guba and Lincoln (1981) identified other advantages of using a questionnaire:

1. It can be self-administered to many persons simultaneously.

2. It provides ease of logistics.

3. A questionnaire calls for some uniformity of responses which facilitates data aggregation and analysis.

However, the call for uniform responses can also result in wide interpretations by respondents, thus raising possibilities of misinterpretation or forced responses. Other disadvantages of using a questionnaire include the impersonal nature of the process, and the limitations imposed on the range of responses by the nature of this form of instrumentation.

Construction

Construction of the instrument proved to be a most challenging task. A copy of the survey questionnaire is provided as Appendix A. The survey of the literature regarding school-based management convinced the researcher that existing instruments were not appropriate for adaptation because of the particular focus of the study; therefore a specific instrument needed to be devised.

Content sources. With the exception of the contextual information, data sought through the questionnaire items were suggested by the literature review. Using the focus of the study as a guide initially, items were extracted from the contents of the literature as the survey proceeded and placed in general categories which approximated the general and specific research questions. All items in each category were reviewed for applicability in the study, and to avoid, as much as was possible, replication across categories. Hence, all content of the questionnaire, except the contextual information items, was drawn from the theoretical and practical perspectives found in the extensive literature. This engendered the possibility that unstated assumptions might be a cause of concern to respondents, and, consequently, the derivation processes for the content were explained briefly in a covering letter to all respondents.

Structure and design. In devising an appropriate structure and presentation format for the questionnaire, an extensive range of resources was reviewed (e.g., Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1990; de Vaus, 1990; Fowler, 1988; Labaw, 1980), many examples were examined, and researchers experienced in questionnaire design were consulted. From these actions, a series of propositions emerged which generally guided the design and structure of the questionnaire. These propositions included ensuring an attractive format which facilitated ease and speed of completion, the placing of categories and category items in a logical and coherent order with appropriate transitions between them, providing clear, brief instructions, using examples where appropriate, phrasing the language of the contents to ensure clarity, simplicity and the avoiding of biased, leading, or double-barreled statements and questions, avoiding questions and statements that might elicit embarrassment or hostility, and, interestingly, avoiding using terms such as questionnaire and checklist in the instrument to minimize the possibility of negative reactions to such terms. That particular advice was followed, with the term survey being preferred, although the term questionnaire is used in the dissertation to avoid confusion with the interview survey.

Using both information from the literature and the technical advice as was appropriate, the instrument was constructed and was redrafted frequently until it was considered to be at an appropriate stage of development to undergo piloting. The piloting process is described elsewhere in this chapter.

Semistructured Interview

Rationale

"The interview as a research method in survey research is unique in that it involves the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals"

(Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 446). Hence, interviews provide some balance with the questionnaire in the instrumentation mix, engendering thickness, depth, and richness to the data being acquired.

Writers such as Biddle and Anderson (1986), Borg and Gall (1989), Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996), and Guba and Lincoln (1981) have identified other advantages of using interviews:

1. Response rates tend to be higher.
2. Interviews are personal in nature.
3. Respondent confusion can be detected and appropriate adjustments made as part of the interview process.
4. Interviews provide a better exploratory tool than a questionnaire.
5. Interviews provide a better format for dealing with sensitive matters.
6. The researcher can note affective responses occurring in the interview process.
7. Interviews approximate real life situations.

Disadvantages of interviews were also noted by these writers. These included:

1. The possible presence of subjectivity and bias in the researcher.
2. Interviews are expensive in terms of time and cost.
3. Interviews are rarely conducted with large or random samples.

Construction

In addition to the opening section which described the procedures followed in establishing the context of the interview, there were two other sections in the schedules One, letter designated P, was focused on principals. The other, designated by the letters S or AS, was focused on district office staff, with the letter variations being used to accommodate minor internal differences which reflected the nature of the positions of superintendent and associate superintendents. Probe questions were included, although these were used as broad guides only, as the content and directions of interviews frequently created opportunities for other probe questions. Interview schedules are provided as Appendix B.

Content sources. Interview questions were suggested by the categories and items which emerged from the review of the literature and the construction of the questionnaire, and to a far lesser extent by the questionnaire responses. The questions were devised so that aspects of the questionnaire and respondents' reactions to them, including the questionnaire's design and content, could be explored in greater depth, and were aimed at engendering thickness and richness to questionnaire data, and at exploring other issues and matters which arose in the course of the interview.

Structure and design. In developing a semistructured interview format, the advice of Berg (1995) was apt,

> This type of interview involves the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and/or special topics. These questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewers are allowed sufficient freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardized questions. (p. 33)

Hence, questions and possible probe questions were devised so that a logical order was followed, but with sufficient flexibility so that matters could be probed, pursued, and more closely analyzed through the interview dialogue.

The interview guides were subjected to piloting processes, and these are described elsewhere in this chapter.

Documentation

"Documents and files, the spoor of contemporary organizations, are part of the information resources available to the field evaluator" (Patton, 1990, p. 235). The review of the literature about school-based management suggested that documentation might be a useful source of insights into the phenomenon of school-based management policies and practices, in view of the descriptive rather than analytical nature of much of the literature. Further, given that school-based management has been mandated in the province of Alberta only recently, and that the school district which was the subject of the research was in the early stages of implementation, it was reasonable to assume that documentation would exist which would be focused on the policy and implementation issues at both provincial and school district levels. Using the same logic, it was also reasonable to assume that, because of the brief time span involved, there would be little post-implementation documentation available in the forms of policy and process reviews, and reports of influences on school programs and student achievement. In general, these assumptions proved to be accurate.

Patton has suggested that surveys of documentation have a dual purpose. They can provide basic information about background, decisions, processes, and activities, and they can suggest ideas, questions, and avenues for pursuit through other research techniques. These suggestions provided the basis for the survey of documentation, the processes of which are described in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness

Donmoyer's observation that the purpose of research is to provide a broader range of interpretations to the consumer has been noted. However, Erlandson et al. (1993) have also observed that

> if intellectual inquiry is to have an impact on human knowledge, either by adding to an overall body of knowledge or by solving a particular problem, it must guarantee some measure of credibility about what it has inquired, must communicate in a manner that will enable application by its intended audience, and must enable its audience to check on its findings and the inquiry process by which the findings were obtained. (p.28)

Hence trustworthiness was an integral component of all facets of the study.

As the study used approaches associated with both quantitative and qualitative perspectives in a coherentist mode, it was appropriate that the study avail itself of quality control measures which reflected this. Several writers (e.g., Erlandson et al., 1993; Krupa, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) have developed schemas which generally aligned categories of trustworthiness used in both research modes. These provide a relevant and useful structure for this study (see Table 3.1).

Strategies for Addressing Trustworthiness

Internal Validity/Credibility

Erlandson et al. (1993), citing Lincoln and Guba (1985), noted that, in the traditional research paradigm, truth value, internal validity, ascribed an isomorphic relationship between the data and the phenomena represented by the data. However, they also noted "more pertinent is the compatibility of the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the inquiry's respondents with those that are attributed to them" (p. 30). A range of strategies was used to enhance the truth value of the study.

Triangulation. A key strategy for ensuring the truthfulness and authenticity of the study was that of triangulation. Yin (1989) observed that

> the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging lines of enquiry, a process of triangulation. . . . Thus, any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode. (p. 97)

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) also observed that "triangulation prevents the investigator from accepting too readily the validity of initial impressions; it enhances the scope, density, and clarity of constructs developed during the course of the investigation" (p. 48).

Several types of triangulation were noted in the literature. In this study, methods triangulation was used, whereby a variety of data collection devices were used to examine the consistency of findings. There was no assumption made that consistency would necessarily flow from triangulation, as Patton (1990) warned,

> There is no magic in triangulation. The evaluator using different methods to investigate the same program should not expect that the findings generated by those different methods will automatically come together to produce some nicely integrated whole. Indeed, the evidence is that one ought to expect initial conflicts in findings from qualitative and quantitative data and expect those findings to be received with varying degrees of credibility. (p. 466)

TABLE 3.1

Schematic representation of trustworthiness categories
Adapted from Erlandson et al. (1993); Krupa (1994); Lincoln & Guba, (1985)

Criterion	Quantitative Term	Qualitative Term	Central Constructs
Truth Value	Internal Validity	Credibility	The establishment of confidence in the truth of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects/respondents with whom and in the context of which the inquiry was undertaken
Applicability	External Validity	Transferability	The determination of the extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects/respondents
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability	The determination of whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if it were replicated with similar subjects/respondents in a similar context
Neutrality	Objectivity	Confirmability	Establishing the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the subjects/respondents and conditions of the inquiry, and not by the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the researcher

In the study, data were collected from three sources, using three methods. The sources were principals, school district administrators, and documents. The methods consisted of a survey questionnaire, interviews, and reviews of selected documents.

Other strategies used included ensuring, as far as possible, the validity of the instruments, establishing researcher presence and credibility in the school district, respondent review of interview transcripts and other forms of member checks, triangulation of data in analysis, as discussed in Chapter 4, and providing guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality.

Instrument validity. The validity of the instrumentation developed for the study was necessarily a key concern to the researcher and for the study. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) commented that "internal validity raises the problem of whether conceptual categories understood to have mutual meanings between the participants and the observer are shared" (p. 342). The development and piloting processes of the instrumentation are described elsewhere in this chapter. Additionally, the actions of basing the questionnaire and interview categories and items in the extended literature survey, and of consulting the literature on instrument construction and with authorities in the field, have all contributed to the technical rigor, internal validity, and credibility of the study.

Member checks. Erlandson et al. (1993) observed that "because the realities that will be included are those that have individually and collectively been constructed by persons within the context of the study, it is imperative that both data and interpretations should be verified by those persons" (p. 31). In the study, interview transcripts were provided to all respondents, except in two instances where respondents specifically and voluntarily declined to review transcripts, and follow-up discussions were held with each of the remaining respondents. Additionally, copies of a draft data analysis were provided to all questionnaire respondents and to district office staff who had participated in interviews, and responses were invited. A copy of the study's outcomes has been lodged with the school district's central office.

Researcher presence and credibility. Patton (1990), citing Alkin (1979), stated that "the utility of any evaluation is closely associated with and heavily dependent on the personal and professional credibility of the evaluation researcher" (p. 461). Considerable care was taken in this study to ensure the professional credibility of the researcher, thereby contributing to the overall credibility of the study. Initially, the district superintendent was contacted about the study, and personal rapport and the bona fides of the researcher were established. Initial contact with principals was made through a general statement placed in the district's regular news digest to schools. Subsequently, each principal and district office administrator was contacted in person or by phone, the researcher's background and the nature and purposes of the research were explained, and a personal plea was made for support with the research. Full support was both assured and given in each case. The return rate of the questionnaire, and the fact that all interview participants who were invited voluntarily accepted the invitation, are indicative of the level of researcher credibility. Meticulous attention to matters of confidentiality, anonymity, and follow-up commitments contributed to this credibility.

Confidentiality and anonymity. Guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity were given orally and in writing to all questionnaire respondents, and orally to all interview respondents. The researcher was scrupulous in adhering to all such guarantees. In addition, interview transcribing was undertaken by a professional transcriber who operated under a code of ethics which included safeguarding the confidentiality and anonymity of audio tape contents. According to Berg (1995), "although researchers certainly do have a professional responsibility to search for knowledge, they also have an ethical responsibility to avoid exposing subjects to potential harm" (p. 216). Actions taken in respect of confidentiality and anonymity engendered a safe environment for the expression and exploration of ideas.

External Validity/Transferability

The site-specific nature of school-based management at both school and school district level, the use of a single, small school district in a case study mode, and the purposive sampling methods used, caused this study to make no serious claims of generalizability. Further, "every context shifts over time as the persons in that context, their constructions of reality, and the relationships among them also shift (even if the individuals are the same" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 32). However, Eisner and Peshkin (1990b) noted that "they [generalizations] consist of ideas--images--that in some way allow us to understand or anticipate phenomena we have not encountered from phenomena we have encountered. Generalizations enable us to form expectations on the basis of prior experience" (p. 171). They further noted that "qualitative researchers are justifiably uncomfortable with the notion that the careful study of cases yields conclusions that pertain only to the cases studied and no more" (p. 171).

Hence, this study contributed to the growing pool of knowledge about the impacts, influences, and outcomes of school-based management. It may provide some illumination of the complexity of that knowledge, and it may have relevance in other schools and school districts. Beyond that, there is no obvious warrant for claims of transferability and external validity.

Reliability/Dependability

Erlandson et al. (1993) noted that "the establishment of reliability depends on replication, the assumption being made that repeated application of the same or equivalent instruments to the same subjects under the same conditions will yield similar measurements" (p. 34). However, LeCompte and Preissle (1993) concluded that "this poses an impossible task for any researcher studying naturalistic behavior or unique phenomena" (p. 332). Hence, seeking perceptions, in all their complexity and uniqueness, from a range of individuals about a diverse, complex, and contested social phenomenon such as school-based management renders replication somewhat problematic. Thus, Erlandson et al. further noted that "the quest is not for invariance but for 'trackable variance,' variabilities that can be ascribed to particular sources (error, reality shifts, better insights, etc.)" (p. 34). Strategies used to address such variances and their sources included close attention to instrument construction and validation, pilot testing, and the establishment of a dependability audit trail. Owens (1982) noted that "an audit trail consists of deliberately leaving sufficient evidence so that someone external to the inquiry could review the processes and results of the inquiry and ascertain whether the processes were appropriate and the results were reasonable and credible" (p. 13). Detailed documentation was maintained throughout the study in the form of a research journal, extensive notes and records of the literature review, and of data collection, and records of analyses, findings, and conclusions. These provided a trail of sufficient breadth and depth to permit auditability.

Objectivity/Confirmability

"An inquiry is judged in terms of the degree to which its findings are the product of the focus of its inquiry and not of the bias of the researcher" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 34). Traditional research modes are reliant, in seeking objectivity, on research method approaches that are open to scrutiny, explicated, and replicable, and on the minimization of researcher bias. However, Erlandson et al. (1993) noted that "the naturalistic researcher does not attempt to ensure that observations are free from contamination by the researcher but rather to trust in the confirmability of the data themselves" (p. 34). Erlandson et al., Guba, and Lincoln (1981; 1985) advocated a confirmability audit as the appropriate strategy to be used. Hence, a high level of auditability must be established to ensure objectivity and confirmability. The auditability of this study has been described.

In addition, the following aspects of the study contributed to its objectivity and confirmability:

1. The researcher's background in school-based management environments, and therefore a source of potential bias, was explained to all respondents, and included as a limitation to the study.

2. Construction of the instruments included the avoidance of presenting a positive or negative orientation, and the inclusion of both positive or desirable and negative or undesirable aspects, as explicated in the literature. The logical order of categories established in the instruments was intended to minimize or avoid respondent perceptions of any relative importance being attributed by the researcher to either categories or their contents. This is a contentious point with some writers. Labaw (1980) noted that "survey researchers can legitimately be accused of overemphasizing the importance of asking unbiased questions in order to evade the problem of bias" (p. 148).

3. The response to the questionnaire by all principals in the district led to a reasonable conclusion that the perceptions of these key participants were represented in the study.

4. The semistructured nature of the interviews permitted clarification and exploration of issues and matters raised in and derived from the questionnaire and interview processes, and permitted respondents to introduce other ideas and perceptions.

5. The strategy of triangulation employed in the study.

6. The attendance to matters of the ethical conduct of the research.

Piloting Processes

Both the questionnaire and the interview schedule were subjected to piloting processes. The broad purposes of the pilot processes were to (a) assess the design features of the structures of the instruments; (b) assess the relevance, appropriateness, and clarity of the contents of the instruments; (c) detect problems with the administration of the instrument; and (d) determine the approximate instrument administration time.

Questionnaire

Instrument design. The details of this process have been described elsewhere. During the design processes, the instrument, in various draft forms, was examined by experienced researchers, for example, members of the supervisory committee, and by other doctoral candidates, and many suggestions were made to improve the design and contents of the instrument. Suggestions included, for example, adjustments to language to improve item clarity, and changes to instrument format and layout.

Pilot cohort. A cohort of nine educational administrators was invited to participate in the pilot testing of the instrument. The cohort was carefully structured in the following ways:

1. Three principals from three different, small, rural school districts where school-based management had recently been implemented. Their situations approximated, in some ways, the situation of the school district examined in the study, especially in that the principals were aware of the conditions prevailing both before and after the implementation of school-based management.

2. Three experienced principals from the Edmonton Public Schools District. School-based management has been a feature of this school district for some considerable time. These cohort members were only distantly aware of conditions in the district prior to the implementation of school-based management, however, their input was considered important in order to provide a check on the instrument's content and categories in the light of the experiences of these principals with school-based management.

3. Three superintendents from three school districts which also approximated the situation of the school district in the study, and where school-based management had recently been introduced. The superintendents were from different school districts to those of the principals. While district executive staff were not included in the actual questionnaire survey in the study, it was believed that the superintendents' experience, expertise, and perspectives across schools and districts could bring valuable insights to the content of the questionnaire.

All cohort members were, or had recently been, graduate program members in educational administration, and were familiar with the theory, practices, and exigencies of survey design.

Pilot testing tasks. Cohort members were briefed in person and by memo of the nature of their tasks (see Appendix C1). While particular attention was focused on content, structure, layout, and language, responses were also invited in any areas which might enhance the quality of the instrument.

Outcomes. The pilot testing yielded an extensive array of responses and suggestions. All of these were placed on a categories grid of content, structure, language, and other suggestions, for evaluation. Most suggestions fell in the categories of structure and language, with few in other categories. The content area attracted the least comment. Each suggestion was evaluated and adopted, adapted, or discarded, with the instrument being redrafted to reflect amendments. The draft was reviewed by the supervisory and candidacy committees, and further suggestions in the form of fine-tuning were made. Data from the piloting of the questionnaire were not used in the study.

Interview

As the interview schedule was designed to elicit responses from respondents who, with the exception of the school district administrators, had completed a questionnaire which had directed their focus to specific elements of school-based management in their schools and school district, and after consultations with experienced interviewers, a process of piloting-in-action was adopted. The adoption of this approach was influenced by Owens (1982), who stated that "the naturalistic inquirer seeks not some 'objectivity' brought about through methodology but, rather, strives for validity through personalized, intimate, understandings of phenomena stressing 'close in' observations to achieve factual, reliable, and confirmable data" (p. 10).

Review cohort. Rural school principal members of the questionnaire pilot testing cohort, representing more closely the situation of the school district examined in the study, were requested to review the interview schedule, including the probe questions, in the light of their experiences and their involvement in the questionnaire pilot testing. These reviews yielded suggestions which resulted in some adjustments to the probe questions.

District office personnel. At the suggestion of the supervisory committee, district office personnel of the district examined in the study, the superintendent and the associate superintendents, were interviewed prior to the completion of the questionnaire survey. As part of the interview processes, they were invited to critique the interview schedule at the close of the interview, and to suggest areas which might have been overlooked from their perspectives, or which might be improved. This process yielded some minor suggestions, which were evaluated and incorporated in the schedule as appropriate.

Principal cohort. The same process of critiquing was adopted in interviews with principals. This also yielded some minor suggestions in the area of content, and one major suggestion in the same area. This suggestion was discarded after evaluation as it was outside the scope of the study.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with the standards, requirements, and expectations established in the University of Alberta guidelines, *University Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants,* as approved by the General Faculties Council, 1985, and by the Department of Educational Policy Studies statement, *Research Ethics Review Policies and Procedures, 1988.*

The study was approved by the University of Alberta Department of Educational Policy Studies Ethics Review Committee prior to commencement of research activities. Strict conformity with the standards and procedures as approved was ensured throughout the research and follow-up activities, with particular attention being given to matters of voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and ethical use of outcomes of the study.

Style

The convention has been adopted throughout the dissertation of presenting statements by respondents, written and oral, in italicized, indented style. Additionally, minor changes were made to some statements to improve presentation.

Delimitations

The study was potentially delimited by a number of factors, including the following:

1. Data were collected from one school district only.

2. Questionnaire data were collected from school principals only.

3. Respondents were volunteers from amongst principals and district administrators only.

4. Other possibly relevant sources of data, notably teachers and parents, were not included in the study.

5. Only one facet of school reform and change, school-based management, was examined in the study; the study did not attempt to examine other factors possibly influencing the quality of school programs and student achievement, unless they arose incidentally in the study.

6. As the study focused on perceptions held at a particular time by particular people, and was essentially descriptive and exploratory, causal inferences which might have been drawn were limited by the non-experimental nature of the research, by inadequacies in the research method, and by weaknesses in the data.

Limitations

Several potential weaknesses in the study can be identified, including the following:

1. The study examined perceptions held by respondents and, as perceptions are interpretations held by individuals based on their experiences, they cannot accurately report what they have not experienced, do not know, or do not consider appropriate or relevant.

2. Instrumentation was devised within boundaries of theory, knowledge, and experience about both the instrumentation design and content, and these limitations influenced their reliability and validity.

3. The knowledge and skill of the researcher in devising the instruments, administering the survey, conducting the interviews, surveying documents, analyzing, interpreting, and describing the data, and in determining findings and drawing conclusions.

4. The perceptions held by the researcher on the basis of personal experiences as an administrator in a school-based management environment.

5. As the study was not longitudinal, and examined the perceptions of specific participants at a particular time, the data might not be representative of that which might be obtained at another time or from another cohort.

6. As the data were gathered from one small school system which was adopting and adapting a form of school-based management aligned to the parochial realities of the system and its schools, generalizations to other schools and school districts are only justifiable, with extreme caution, to the extent that the data and outcomes may illuminate possible realities in such schools and systems, and that the knowledge gleaned in this study may contribute to a general pool of knowledge and experience about school-based management.

Assumptions

The study proceeded on the basis of the following assumptions:

1. That participants held perceptions about relationships between school-based management, program quality and student achievement.

2. That participants in the study were willing to share their perceptions with the researcher in a truthful manner, and as objectively as the focus and nature of the study permitted.

3. That the instrumentation, as devised and applied, and the document survey and analysis were appropriate and adequate devices for gathering the data, and that the procedures used for data analysis and presentation, in singular and aggregated form, reflected the responses obtained through the instrumentation.

4. That the influences of perceptions held by the researcher were minimized as far as possible, and did not significantly influence the data, including the data collection and analysis procedures.

Summary

The contents of Chapter 3 have outlined the type of study and its focus, and have examined the philosophical and epistemological bases for the research design in the context of some dilemmas in contemporary research in educational administration. The orientation of the research design was examined, including the influences of perceptions on research processes and researchers, and the influence of the calls in the literature for research examination of school production functions. The nature, development, and piloting processes of the instrumentation were examined, and attention was paid to the important matters associated with trustworthiness of the study. The chapter concluded with a review of ethical considerations in the study, and statements of the study's delimitations, limitations, and assumptions.

In the next chapter, the data gathering and analysis procedures of the study are explored.

CHAPTER 4

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The procedures used in the study for the collection and analysis of data are examined in this chapter. The processes used to identify the school district, and the data sources used in the study are described, as are the data collection and data management steps taken. The procedures used in the data analysis stages of the study are explored, and an analysis of the effectiveness of the instrumentation is undertaken.

Data Sources

Identification of the School District

The school district identified for examination in this study may be considered as semi-rural. It is a comparatively small district comprising 21 schools, encompassing elementary and secondary schools. In seeking to focus the study on this school district, Patton's (1990) observation that a study's design involves "an interplay of resources, possibilities, creativity and personal judgements" (p. 13) was most apt. Reasonable proximity, the categories of schools in the district, the limitations on the resources of the researcher, and the recent implementation of school-based management in the district so that perspectives before and after implementation were available, all suggested that the district was an appropriate site for this research. Additionally, the interested response from the district superintendent to the researcher's initial approach was encouraging. The superintendent further noted that the district had not been the subject of substantial amounts of research, and that he believed that sufficient time had passed since the implementation of school-based management for some research examination of the phenomenon to be of value.

District name. For the purposes of the study, and in keeping with the guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity given, a name has been created for the district for use in this study. After an examination of the names of all school districts, public and separate, in the province, the name *Snowfields School District* was chosen.

Participants

Principals. As key personnel at both school and district level for the implementation of school-based management, characterized by Fullan (1991) as "the gatekeepers of change" (p. 11), principals were identified as the main data source for the study. The comparatively small number of schools in the district, the nature of the schools, and the site-specific nature of school-based management, suggested that the sample for the questionnaire survey be all 21 principals (see Table 4.1).

TABLE 4.1

Categories of schools in Snowfields School District

(*N* = 21)

School Category	*n*	Notes
K-6	6	1 French Immersion
K-9	11	1 French Immersion 2 Special Education
K-12	1	-
7-9	1	French Immersion
10-12	2	-

From a target population of the 21 principals, 6 were invited to participate in the interview processes. The members of this purposive sample were arrived at through discussions with the district superintendent, the associate superintendents, and school principals. A sample was sought in which the types and locations of schools in the district were represented, in which pre- and post-implementation perspectives were present, and in which there was some experience in district activities beyond individual schools which influenced the implementation of school-based management in the district.

Influence of school type. Differences between school types, specifically elementary and secondary schools, in aspects of organizational and leadership styles are acknowledged in the literature (e.g., Berman & Gjeltens, 1984, cited in Mohrman, Wohlstetter, & Associates, 1994; Firestone & Herriot, 1982a, 1982b; Wilson, Herriot, & Firestone, 1991; Van Scroy, 1989), and, therefore, these differences could be considered as factors possibly influencing the study. However, in the context of an examination of school-based management, it can be postulated that these differences contribute to the site-specific ecology of each school which, theoretically, is a strong distinguishing feature of the implementation of school-based management. Consequently, there was no attempt to distinguish between school types in the conduct of the study and in the interpretation of the data, with the exception of ensuring that school types were represented in the purposive sample of principals used for the interviews, and where such differences surfaced in the context of any of the data presented in the study.

School district administrators. Four members of the school district's executive staff were used as data sources. These persons were the district superintendent and the three associate superintendents. Each participated individually in a semistructured interview. The sample of school district administrators was limited in this way because of the small size of the district's central office staff, and because the duties associated with each of these positions encompassed, in a supervisory sense, all of the operational responsibilities of the central office. Further, there are clear indications in the literature that the articulation between school district leadership and management and schools is a critical facet of school-based management. Such theoretical mutuality of influences meant that the senior school district administrators formed an important data source in the study.

Documents

Document data sources in the study fell into two broad categories, those that pertained to the province of Alberta generally, and those that pertained to Snowfields School District in particular. Documents in the former category were mainly collected from the resources of Alberta Education, the provincial government's education department. In the latter category, the central office of the school district was the chief source of documents. Very little documentation was available from individual schools, although an amount of documentation collected from the central office either came from individual school sources, or was available in summary or aggregated forms.

Data Collection

With the exception of some of the documentation, all data were collected in the winter of 1996/1997. Some of the documentation, mainly that pertaining to provincial policies, was collected earlier in 1996.

Questionnaire

Contact with principals. The general style of the researcher's approaches to principals has been described in Chapter 3. Considerable care was taken to establish a positive rapport with principals from the moment of first contact. This included providing explanations of the researcher's background, professional interests, the background to the study, and the reasons why Snowfields School District was chosen as the research site. This was a time consuming task, but at some profit to the study, as all principals completed the questionnaire and all principals who were invited voluntarily participated in an interview. A number of principals launched into discussions about school-based management during the first contact, and many expressed some satisfaction at being provided with an opportunity to express their views.

Instrument package. The questionnaire instrument was printed on paper of a color that was difficult to ignore, and the questionnaire package included a covering letter and a stamped, addressed return envelope. The covering letters were personalized using a computerized mail merge system, and each letter was individually signed. The letters were printed on University of Alberta letterhead, and the both the forward and return envelopes carried University of Alberta identification. All of these measures were intended to impart a sense of professionalism in the management of the research.

Codes. Each respondent was allocated a 3-digit code which was known only to the researcher. Once the coding system had been devised, potential respondents were allocated a code on a random basis. The code was carried on each page of the instrument as a security measure in case any page became dislodged, and to facilitate receipt and follow-up action. The same allocated code was used when principals participated in an interview, and school district personnel who were interviewed were also allocated a code using the same numerical system.

Despatch and receipt. The questionnaire packages were despatched to principals through the school district's internal mail system on the same day. It was not considered appropriate to indicate a return date on the instrument because of the prior interest in the research generally expressed by principals, and because of the administrative load carried by principals. However, verbal and written requests were made to principals to allocate a high priority to the completion and return of the questionnaire. Some were returned in a matter of days, with the majority being returned within three weeks. Follow-up phone calls to those principals who had not responded were made approximately one month after the initial despatch. With one exception this elicited commitments to respond immediately, commitments which were adhered to. The exception was a case of mail being lost in transit. However, the respondent had retained a photocopy of the completed instrument, and this was collected in person by the researcher. Upon receipt, questionnaires were checked for completion, with follow-up action for missing data only necessary in two instances.

Personalized letters of appreciation were sent to all principals, and a general note of appreciation was inserted in the district's regular news digest to principals.

Interviews

Contact. Potential interview respondents were contacted either by phone or in person. In the case of principals, invitations to participate were issued at the same time as invitations to participate in the survey questionnaire. Arrangements were made for convenient times for the conduct of the interviews. The interviews were conducted over a period of approximately one month. At the suggestion of the supervisory committee, district office personnel were interviewed in the early stages of the conduct of the questionnaire survey with principals (see Table 4.2).

TABLE 4.2

Positions of interview respondents
(*N* = 10)

Position	*n*
Superintendent	1
Associate Superintendent	3
Principal (K-9)	2
Principal (10-12)	2
Principal (K-6)	1
Principal (7-9)	1

Interview settings and length. All interviews were conducted at the work site of each respondent, always at his or her work desk or a nearby conference table. Interview length varied considerably, with the average time being approximately one hour. It was a common experience for respondents to continue discussions at the conclusion of the audio taping. The contents of these discussions were included in the data only in the sense that they were always repetitions of what had been stated in the taped interview. Several respondents in the principal cohort questioned the researcher on the general nature of the views expressed by their fellow principals.

Conduct. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) asked, "is it conceivable that you can learn anything of consequence from anyone, save the uncontrollably loquacious, without rapport?" (p. 79). The process of establishing and maintaining rapport commenced with the first contact with potential respondents, and continued throughout. Principals appeared to especially appreciate the researcher, as a practising principal who had been involved in a considerable number of research interviews and questionnaire surveys, understanding the pressures and exigencies of their positions, and the imposition being placed on them by the interview processes. Interviews always commenced with exchanges of pleasantries and mutual explanations of professional backgrounds. The researcher provided each respondent with a small memento of his homeland, and this often led to respondents reciprocating with a memento of their own. The researcher's demeanor in interviews was, as much as possible, that of encouraging respondents to respond as fully as possible to questions posed without permitting his perspectives to intrude, either through spoken or body language. All interviews were conducted in an atmosphere which reflected mutual respect, interest, and openness in sharing knowledge and perspectives.

Audio recording. All interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the respondent. A small, reasonably unobtrusive machine was used in conjunction with a flat table microphone. The transcriber described the audio quality on tapes as excellent, and very facilitative of accurate transcribing. Some 220 pages of data were generated in the interview processes.

Confirmation. Transcriptions were personally delivered to all respondents, with follow-up phone discussions being held shortly after. The two respondents who voluntarily declined to review transcripts both stated that they had not made any comments which they would need to revisit, or which they believed would not be an accurate reflection of their views. Respondents had veto rights over the contents of transcripts, but none chose to exercise those rights.

Documents

In addition to policy documents collected from Alberta Education, an exhaustive survey of available school district documentation was carried out. This was mainly undertaken at the Snowfields School District's central office. The district superintendent and the district office staff ensured that the researcher had access to as much documentation as was possible and appropriate. The following types of documents were collected:

1. General policy handbooks.
2. District education plan, 1996-2000.
3. Site-based management policy and procedures handbooks.
4. Principals' handbook.
5. Annual education results reports.
6. Agendas and minutes of school board meetings.
7. Executive summaries of school education plans.
8. Position papers.
9. School district newspapers.
10. Annual reports.

Little documentation was available from individual schools, and basically consisted of Education Plans.

While available documentation was not extensive, and following a document trail in respect of the pre-implementation processes in the district was somewhat problematic, the researcher was conscious that the school-based management developments in the district were just one of many changes and issues pressing on the district and its personnel, and that it was unrealistic to expect documents to provide an expansive data source in relation to one facet alone.

Data Management

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), "data management and data analysis are integrally related. There is no firm boundary between them" (p. 45). However, in the interest of maintaining auditability, a brief description of the data management processes employed in the data collection stages of the study is provided.

Questionnaire

Two forms of data were extracted from the questionnaire instruments:

1. Scale responses for each item were extracted and entered on a computer data base for transfer to data analysis facilities at the University of Alberta. Each item was checked several times against its data base entry to ensure that it was entered accurately. Where a respondent placed a range of responses against an item, a point on the scale was allocated alternatively for each such response, unless contextual analysis indicated that a particular response was appropriate. Such ranges of responses were not common.

2. Comments written on the instrument, both invited comments for particular items and unsolicited comments, were extracted and collated against item numbers, and placed in both computer and hard copy files. Such comments were numerous. These formed a data source in the analysis stages of the study (see Table 4.3).

TABLE 4.3

Categories and percentages of comments on questionnaire instrument (*N* = 160)

Comments	*n*	%
Invited comments	100	62.5
Unsolicited comments	60	37.5

Interviews

Transcripts of interviews were retained in computer and hard copy forms in files in the study's data banks. Amendments arising from the confirmation processes were recorded in these files.

Documents

Documentary data were retained in hard copy files. After analysis, appropriate sections were transferred to computer files.

Confidentiality. In keeping with the ethical requirements of the study, no school district document was used in the study in a way which would permit identification of the district or its members. Further, the documentation was retained for the researcher's exclusive use only. A list of such documentation was provided to the chair of the supervisory committee.

Data Analysis

Analytical Perspective

"Data analysis is the process of making sense out of one's data. In the process of analysis, data are consolidated, reduced, and to some extent interpreted" (Merriam, 1988, pp. 127-130). The sense-making in this study was informed, to some extent, by the coherentist perspective adopted in the research methodology. However, Walker

(1991) observed that "coherence is easier to espouse than achieve" (p. 507). Howe (1992), in advocating a form of compatibilism through the adoption of a range of research methods and techniques, exhorted researchers using this mode to "ensure the overall warrant of conclusions drawn" (p. 251). This section of the chapter describes and summarizes the data analysis procedures used in the study in claiming such warrant for the findings made and the conclusions drawn.

Questionnaire Survey Data

Statistical analysis procedures. Data extracted from the instruments and encoded were entered into a statistical analysis program, *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSSx).* The nature of the study, and its assumption of non-generalizability, precluded the need for any statistical data beyond basic descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, frequency percentages, and some limited references to means. These proved appropriate for the needs of the study.

Invited and unsolicited comments. The data obtained from the survey instrument in these ways were treated in several ways. Invited comments were collated and used in the overall consideration and analysis of the particular instrument categories from which they were drawn, and also in conjunction with the questionnaire statistical data, interview data, and documentation data, in considering emergent patterns and categories arising from the study. Unsolicited comments were used in the investigation of each category item and in conjunction with statistical analysis. The comments were used to illuminate, if possible, the aggregated statistical data for each item, and to bring perspectives to items which may have been overlooked or lost in the application of statistical procedures. A difficulty for the researcher in this situation was to evaluate the relevance of such comments and to allocate a weighting to them in reaching conclusions about specific findings. Each situation was considered in the context of the particular item. These data were also used in the interpretation of data about the instrument categories, and in the consideration of the research questions.

Interview Data

Merriam (1988) has observed that "collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process" (p.123). In the conduct of the interviews, interpretation and analysis of both the process and data were an integral part of data collection, reflected in the ongoing review and reorientation of the structure and content of the interview schedules, giving substance to Merriam's contention that "the process . . . is recursive and dynamic" (p. 123).

Post-collection analysis took the form of the following steps:

1. The interview data were examined and interacted with in some detail, permitting the researcher to become conscious of the both the broad substance and detail of the data. The interaction took a multitude of forms, including noting similarities and differences, language usage, respondent reactions to questions, and so forth. This process constituted an initial open coding of the data.

2. Conceptual labels of the data were derived from this process. Such labels were described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as "labels placed on discrete happenings, events, and other instances of phenomena" (p. 61). Selecting an appropriate unit of analysis presented a dilemma for the researcher because of the rich nature of much of the data set against the need for the amount of detail emerging from the analysis to be kept at manageable levels. The decision was reached to use a conceptual unit of analysis, defined by Berg (1995) as "words grouped together into conceptual clusters (ideas)" (p. 182). This unit of analysis was generally informed by the research questions, by the broad conceptual categories derived from the review of the literature, and by the contents of the data themselves. Approximately 120 conceptual labels were derived in this way.

3. The conceptual units were then reviewed and placed into categories, a process defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as "a classification of concepts" (p. 61). They further commented that "this classification is discovered when concepts are

compared to one another and appear to pertain to a similar phenomenon" (p. 61). Approximately 30 categories were derived in this way. Berg (1995) noted that "the categories researchers use in a content analysis can be determined inductively, deductively, or by some combination of both" (p. 180). The conceptual analysis and categorization processes used both deductive and inductive processes, although the semistructured nature of the interview processes, the time limitations imposed on interviews, and the descriptive nature of the study meant that deductive processes predominated in the analysis. Some conceptual labels were set aside at this stage as they were not considered to be germane to the thrusts of the study.

4. The contents of each category were then reexamined to ensure the relevance of concepts, and to detect errors in the allocation of conceptual units to categories. Merriam (1988) suggested that units should be placed in one category only. However, a number of units could be located readily and helpfully in a number of categories, and this process was followed. Units set aside in the categorization process were reevaluated and either placed in categories or discarded. This process meant that discarded conceptual units had been examined and considered at least three times.

5. The questionnaire survey provided an appropriate analytical framework for the study, in that its contents were derived from the theoretical perspectives and outcomes of research and practice found in the literature. However, it was decided not to integrate the interview data with the framework after the categorization processes were completed. It was considered that direct linkaging of aggregated questionnaire responses with interview data, at this stage, might have diminished the richness and thickness of each by possibly excluding perspectives across categories and items. Rather, each data source, including those from questionnaire comments and the documentation analysis, were used, separately and collectively, to inform the analysis and evaluation of each element of the analytical framework. This approach accorded

with the study's stated research philosophy, illuminated in terms of data analysis, by Glaser and Strauss (1967),

> In many instances, both forms of data are necessary--not quantitative used to test qualitative, but both used as supplements, as mutual verification and . . . as different forms of data on the same subject which, when compared, will each generate theory. (p. 18)

Document Data

Data evaluation and extraction. All documents were examined for references to any facet of school-based management. All such references were evaluated in situ, and those judged to be appropriate and relevant to the study were extracted and placed in computer and hard copy files. Data were sought which provided information about the context, rationales, and backgrounds of decisions, including implementation decisions, and responses to, reviews of, and reports about decisions and actions. Evidence of adjustment to policies and procedures was sought also. A considerable amount of the documentation was procedural or technical in nature, for example, the school district's school-based management manual, and was usually judged not to be particularly relevant to the thrusts of the study.

Consideration of data. Data obtained in the document survey were used in conjunction with other data to gain understandings and reach conclusions about a range of facets of school-based management in both provincial and school district contexts. These data both provided important background information to the processes which had occurred in Snowfields School District, and added thickness and depth to data which emerged from the analysis of facets of other data forms.

Summary of Data Collection and Analysis

The study's approaches to the collection, management, and analysis of data, and the general rationales for these approaches, are summarized in Table 4.4.

TABLE 4.4

Summary of data collection and analysis procedures

POPULATION	PROCEDURES	RATIONALE
	Survey Questionnaire	
	Collection:	**Advantages:**
Principals of all schools in Snowfields School District	Piloted survey instrument provided to all principals	Efficient; convenient; cost effective; self-administered to a large population; uniformity of responses facilitated data aggregation
	Analysis:	**Disadvantages:**
	Numerical data extracted and treated with computerized statistical package. Comments extracted, collated, analyzed, and integrated with other data forms	Uniformity of responses may not detect nuances of perceptions; possibility of misinterpretation; limitations placed on possible range of responses; impersonal
	Interview	
	Collection:	**Advantages:**
Purposive sample of 6 principals and 4 school district administrators	Semistructured, audio taped interviews; transcribed and confirmed by respondents; researcher and respondent critique of instrument	Personal interaction with respondents; added thickness and depth to other data forms; issues could be explored in depth, including sensitive matters; affective responses could be observed
	Analysis:	**Disadvantages:**
	Transcripts reviewed, data analyzed, coded, categorized and integrated with other data forms	Inefficient and costly; possibility of presence of researcher bias; purposive sample may have been a source of bias

Documentation

	Collection:	**Advantages:**
Provincial, school district, and school policy, procedures, analysis, reporting, and review documentation	Focused on information about discussions, decisions, decision contexts, rationales, implementation actions, responses, reviews, adjustments to policies and procedures	Augmentation of data from other sources contributed to thickness and depth; unobtrusive method of collecting and corroborating data; survey was generally conducted at the convenience of the researcher; no reciprocity required between researcher and respondent; less reactive compared to other methods
	Analysis:	**Disadvantages:**
	Data evaluated, extracted, collated, categorized, and integrated with other data sources	Data sources potentially uncertain and meagre; validity of documents difficult to assess

Revisiting the Research Design

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) observed that

> a commitment to seeking quality in the human sciences requires responsibility to ourselves as researchers, to the participants we study, to our community of scholars, to the various publics who support or otherwise take an interest in the research, to the traditions that inform the research, and to those who inherit the knowledge generated by the research. (p. 319)

The experience gained in the research data collection and analysis stages of the study, and the preliminary analysis of the data, made it possible to revisit and reexamine briefly some facets of the research design.

Appraisal of the Instrumentation

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) have also noted in respect of research that "getting it all is impossible and getting it right is tough" (p. 317). The preliminary appraisal of the instrumentation is focused on ascertaining its efficacy in the light of the experiences of the research processes.

Questionnaire

Responses. The 100% return rate, the generally prompt return of instruments, and the amount of unsolicited information offered in responses, as indicated in Table 4.3, were some indicators of a positive response to the instrument by the respondent cohort. Additionally, the instrument was examined, at various stages of its development, by a total of approximately 40 persons with expertise in questionnaire design and school management, including the respondents themselves and the members of the pilot cohort. In interviews conducted with principals, critiques of the questionnaire instrument were specifically requested. The comments offered were mostly positive and usually referred to the thoroughness and appropriateness of the instrument. One respondent referred to the fact that there were a lot of questions that could be asked about school-based management that were not asked in the questionnaire. She commented that

> *if you ask me what site-based management has to do with, for instance, achievement, and you don't ask me what it has to do with some other area that I think is important, then in the end you might not really know what I think are the advantages of site-based management. You always feel that way when you're answering a survey.*

When this point of view was explored with the respondent, she stated that she realized that the study was focused on a limited number of facets of school-based management, and that the interview would most likely provide opportunities for her views on matters not raised in the questionnaire to be explored.

Strengths and weaknesses. Although there were no major criticisms of the instrument, several specific strengths and weaknesses were identified in the implementation process. The thoroughness and ease of completion were considered to be strengths. The relatively fine focus of some of the categories, especially those related to the quality of school programs and student achievement, did cause some concern to some respondents. There were indications that some of the items in these categories may have been too discriminating or sought outcomes prematurely, usually because of the relatively short time since the initial implementation of school-based management in the district. A respondent commented that

> *I don't think we have enough history to give you a base.*

Further, attributing some facets of change in schools to school-based management proved a problem for some respondents in that they perceived that there were other influences at work in their schools and the district. This was useful as a corroboration of the element of the literature which stressed the difficulty of isolating the influences of school-based management amid a range of influences, and which had been identified as a delimitation of the study.

Because the categories and items in the instrument were derived solely from the literature, it was anticipated that respondents could presume that unstated assumptions were present in items. This did occur in some instances in respect of a very limited number of items, with respondents indicating their views through comments written on the instrument.

The scale posed some problems, with some respondents being uncertain as to whether the third point on the main response scale, identified as *Neutral* in the instrument, referred to the fact that they held or offered no opinion, or the fact that they were neither in agreement nor disagreement with the matter raised in the item. Contextually, the latter was the appropriate interpretation, and one which was made by a majority of respondents. This concern was raised by one respondent only in the piloting of the instrument, and in that case, the respondent considered that adequate contextual guidance was available. There was reluctance on the part of the researcher to design the instrument without the provision of a neutral option, because the absence of such an option may have possibly placed respondents in a situation of having to adopt a perspective in their responses which, in fact, may not actually have reflected or approximated their views. However, this problem could possibly have been avoided if some indication of the nature of the response associated with this segment of the scale had been included in instructions provided in or with the instrument.

The difficulties of examining perceptions, especially in a non-longitudinal study, were a limitation in this study, and were suggested by one respondent,

> *A person is always in the process of revising what they're saying. So in some places maybe I will seem to think differently even from when I filled out the survey, because as you process these things you're continually revising it.*

Interview

Responses. Each interview was conducted in a cordial atmosphere of mutual respect and interest. Response styles varied among respondents from loquacity to the somewhat precise. The researcher was interested to test whether in fact a cohort of ten respondents was appropriate for the study. However, it was increasingly evident, as interview data accumulated, that the point of saturation of sources was being reached, and that the cohort responses generally established reasonable and generally common data parameters. Merriam (1988) considered saturation to be the point at which "continuing data collection produces tiny increments of new information in comparison to the effort expended to get them" (p. 126).

Interview guide. Miles and Huberman (1994) observed that "if interview schedules . . . are not focused, too much superfluous information will be collected" (p. 35). The interview guide proved to be appropriate for the task, and retained the overall direction sought by the semistructured nature of the instrument. Interviews tended to be more structured in the earlier interviews in comparison to those conducted later in the process. This diversification, while not extensive, was a reflection of the researcher's growing experience with the instrument and interview processes, and of the anticipation, based in that experience, of what questions were more relevant and appropriate.

Researcher Values and Perspectives

The nature of perceptions and their potential influence in a study which researched perceptions have been examined briefly in earlier chapters, as has the coherentist perspective which has influenced the research design. However, there are further dimensions of the researcher's values and perspectives which may have also influenced both the research design and its implementation.

Earlier writers, Burrell and Morgan (1979), noted that "in order to understand alternative points of view it is important that a theorist be fully aware of the assumptions upon which his own perspective is based" (p. xi). Burrell and Morgan conceived of these assumptions as being based within the paradigmatic boundaries found in both the traditional and contemporary social theories about organizations. However, LeCompte and Preissle (1993) concluded that "the personal life experiences, cultural ideologies, disciplinary training, philosophical commitments, and issues and problems identified by significant others that so clearly affect goals and questions operate far more subtly on choices of research design" (p. 125). The latter perspective was supported by Jacknicke and Rowell (1987), who stated that "a paradigm is much more than a methodological orientation, for it provides an orientation for our relationship with the world, a world view" (p. 63).

The genesis of the study and the possible consequent limitations posed for it have been stated. However, the researcher's personal and quite strongly held perspectives about the power and potential of schools to influence, and be influenced by, processes of change and development, and the pivotal, though not exclusive, roles of principals and school system leaders in these processes, may have influenced the research design and implementation in the manner suggested by LeCompte and Preissle. Notwithstanding, such views are in accord with many of the thrusts which emerged from the review of the literature. Further, the research design and implementation processes described, and the bias minimization and credibility enhancement endeavors employed in them, represented the researcher's attempts to attenuate, as much as possible, the subtle influences of his personal world view in the study.

Summary

The overall approaches used in the study for the collection and analysis of data have been described in this chapter, including a review of the data sources used, and the approaches to data management employed. Aspects of the research design of the study, as examined in the previous chapter, were revisited and some tentative conclusions about the efficacy of the instrumentation were reached, based on implementational experiences and some preliminary analysis of the data. The chapter concluded with a brief examination of the nature of some subtle influences which were possibly present in the research design and implementation.

In Chapter 5, the policy contexts of both Alberta Education and Snowfields School District are examined, as are the professional contexts of principals and school district executive staff in which school-based management was implemented.

CHAPTER 5

POLICY AND PROFESSIONAL CONTEXTS

Introduction

The implementation of school-based management in Snowfields School District has occurred in a period of intense and sustained change in public governance in the province of Alberta. In this chapter, the general nature and directions of that change are examined, the provincial policy contexts which have mandated the implementation of school-based management are explored, and their translation into policy in Snowfields School District are considered. The school district is described, and the experience of principals and district office executive staff is discussed, as are the knowledge of and experience with school-based management of principals and district office executive staff prior to its implementation in the district. A number of findings are made, and these and other policy and professional elements emerging from the chapter are discussed briefly in the context of facets of the review of the literature.

Provincial Contexts

Redirections in Public Governance

The election in 1993 of a progressive conservative government in Alberta under the leadership of Ralph Klein ushered in the period of quite dramatic change in the public governance of the province. The process of change is still occurring, with its effects still emerging and yet to be comprehensively evaluated. Peters and Richards (1995) noted that "the single most dominant focus for all the government endeavors however, appears to be the elimination of the deficit so that the province will fit comfortably in a globalized world" (p. 24). The dominance of this precept has manifested itself in a particular sociopolitical and economic environment which pervades all facets of provincial public governance. This environment broadly encompasses the following:

1. Deficit budgeting is no longer an acceptable device in provincial governance, with steps being taken to permanently eliminate deficits.

2. Reductions in government expenditure.

3. The introduction of Business Plans for all government departments, with the plans including standards, measures, and results provisions.

4. Increased client involvement in service delivery, with consequent accountability for results.

5. Increased privatization of government functions.

6. Funding equity and the relocation of some local levels of taxation.

7. The implementation of "user pay" principles.

Provincial Influences on Education

The philosophical reorientation of public governance and the changes being wrought by it, are having significant influence on education policies at the provincial level, and, consequently, at the levels of school districts and schools. Alberta Education, the provincial department of education, does not equivocate in its expectation that such influence will occur, stating that "school authorities must either develop and adopt parallel local policies to ensure fit with local context or, by board motion, adopt provincial policies as board policies" (Alberta Education, 1996, p. v). The changes have been placed by Peters and Richards (1995) into five groupings:

1. Governance structures, including reductions in the number of school boards.

2. Fiscal structures.

3. School management, including provisions for parental choice, and increased authority to schools.

4. Charter schools.

5. Program, including expanded student assessment and reporting provisions.

The thrust of these changes has been summarized by Alberta Education (1996),

> The emphasis on a policy-driven and results-based management system is a key characteristic of the education management cycle. It encourages a system of shared responsibility with school boards, schools and school councils in planning, budgeting, implementing, reviewing, adjusting and improving, and reporting of results. The greater responsibility and authority provided to schools brings with it a requirement to ensure there is accountability at the school level for the use of public resources. (p. v)

Provincial Directions for Education

The realignment of education policy has established particular directions for education in the province (see Figure 5.1). The following represent some of the manifestations of these directions.

Mission

Alberta Education's stated mission is to provide "the best possible education for all Alberta students" (Alberta Education, 1996, p. xi).

Beliefs

The mission is informed by a series of beliefs, including the beliefs that all students can learn and experience success, that quality education programs develop the total person, that high expectations challenge all students to achieve, and that resources and relevant decision making should be located where education happens.

Achievement Standards

Alberta Education's policies are clearly focused on achieving and sustaining student achievement. "The province will define acceptable standards and standards of excellence for student achievement" (Alberta Education, 1996, p. xii). Further, "the school's primary responsibility is to ensure that students meet or exceed the provincial standards as reflected in student learning expectations, provincial achievement tests, diploma exams and graduation requirements" (p. xi).

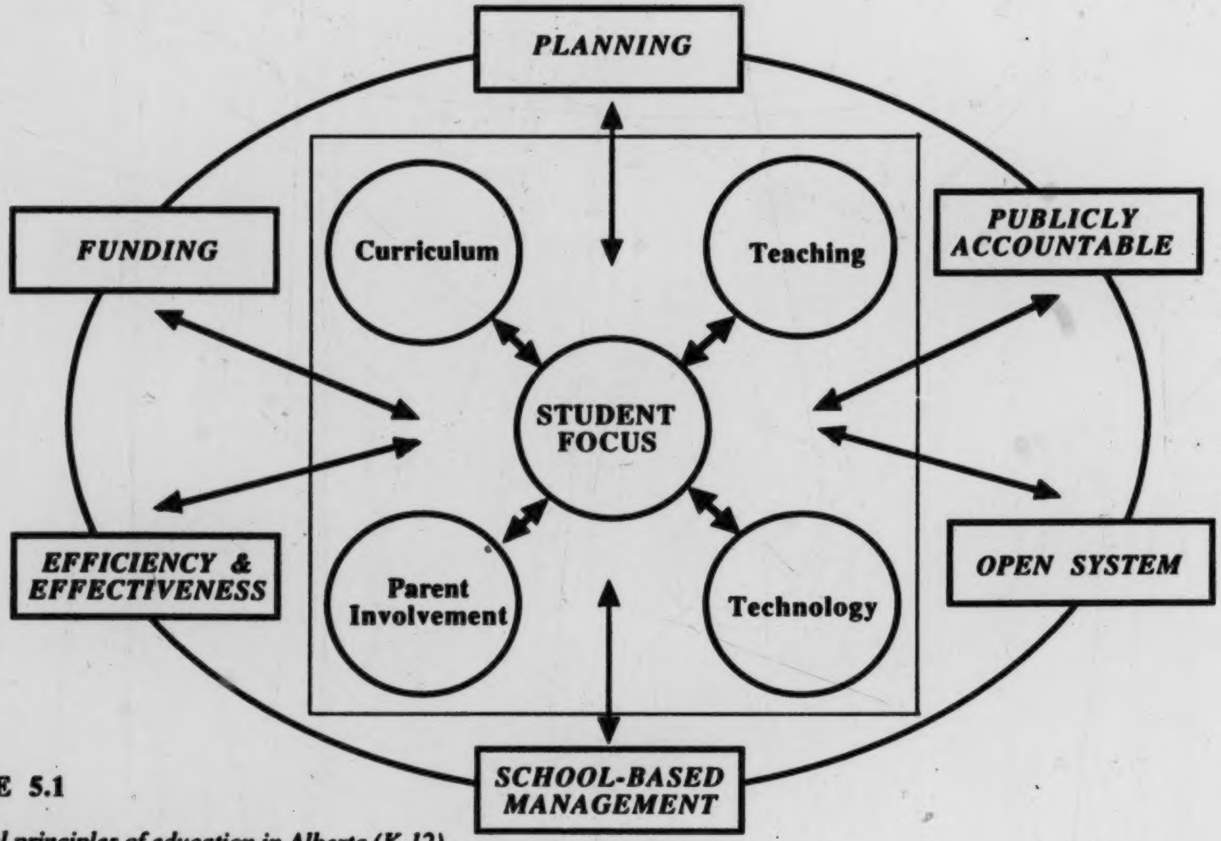

PLANNING
FUNDING
PUBLICLY ACCOUNTABLE
Curriculum
Teaching
STUDENT FOCUS
Parent Involvement
Technology
EFFICIENCY & EFFECTIVENESS
OPEN SYSTEM
SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT

FIGURE 5.1

Structural principles of education in Alberta (K-12)
Adapted from Alberta Education *(Meeting the Challenge III)*

Delivery

Methods for achieving quality and standards are not mandated. "Schools may use any instructional technique acceptable to the community so long as the results are achieved. The school will have authority to deploy resources and determine how results are achieved" (Alberta Education, 1996, p. xi).

Mechanisms for Policy Implementation

In addition to establishing new directions for education in the province, the government has put in place mechanisms for achieving the intent of the policies and their associated directions for education. The following are some of the mechanisms which are pertinent to this study.

Business Plans

The key vehicle giving effect to all of the provincial policy directions is the process of Three-Year Business Plans for education, collectively titled *Meeting the Challenge.* Plans are prepared on a rolling triennium basis. The elements of each plan consist of government priorities, challenges, goals, results, and strategies. A focus on the achievement of high standards by students permeates the plans. For example, it is stated in *Meeting the Challenge III* that "high standards for education are a top priority" (p.1). It is also the first priority in each of the structuring elements of the plan. Key strategies designated for achieving this goal include the implementation of school-based management and the advent of school councils. School authorities in the province are also obligated to produce education plans that accord with both the province's accountability requirements and with local needs.

In commenting on the concept of Business Plans in the education sector, Peters and Richards (1995) noted that the plans were a mixture of neoconservative and neoliberal ideologies. They considered them to be neoconservative because of the value placed on hierarchy, tradition, and control, and neoliberal because of the emphasis placed on free markets and minimal government regulation. However, an argument could also be made that the focus on such matters as student achievement standards and learning outcomes, parent and community involvement in education, school-based management, and charter schools is creating an environment in which Fullan's (1991) concept of second-order change, the deconstruction of educational organizations and the institution of new structures, goals, and roles, may find fertile ground.

School-Based Management

According to Alberta Education (1996), "school-based management involves the whole school community in teaching and learning to ensure high levels of achievement" (Policy 1.8.2). The mandating of school-based management by the province is based in a belief that "establishing an integral relationship among teaching, learning and the decision-making process should result in higher levels of student performance" (Policy 1.8.2). The statutory underpinnings informing this policy are given as the provisions of the Province of Alberta School Act relating to the responsibilities of principals, and the discretionary, advisory, and consultative responsibilities which may be exercised by school councils under the provisions of the Act. Neither of these sections of the Act refers in particular to school-based management, or to any of the generic terms by which the phenomenon is known. It can be concluded, therefore, that the mandating of school-based management in the province is through administrative rather than direct legislative authority.

School Councils

There is a clear assumption that the implementation of school-based management and the establishment of school councils are linked as processes. Alberta Education (1996) has established its guiding policy in respect of school councils as "the recognition of the right of parents to be involved in their children's education and for parents, community members and school staff to be involved in key decisions about the education of students" (Policy 1.8.3). School councils hold advisory and consultative responsibilities. A majority of school council membership must be parents of students enrolled at the school.

Snowfields School District Contexts

The School District

General Description

Snowfields School District covers an area well in excess of 1,000 square miles. Its boundaries encompass several large centers of population as well as rural areas. The 21 schools in the district serve a population of nearly 48,000 residents, with approximately 9,000 full-time day students and kindergarten students enrolled in the schools. Over 800 teaching and support staff are employed by the district (see Table 5.1).

The economic base of the district has become increasingly diversified in recent decades, moving from being essentially agricultural to becoming increasingly industrialized through activities related to coal, oil, and gas resources, power generation, and an increasing amount of other types of industrial and commercial developments. Diversification of government services and the development of post-school education facilities are also contributing to the diversification.

District Governance and Organization

Governance. The school district, as it is now constructed, has been in operation for only a few years, having separated from a county jurisdiction. School district governance is conducted by a Board of Education numbering seven trustees, and which was inaugurated in 1995. The district was not required to undergo amalgamation as part of the province's efforts to reduce the number of school jurisdictions. The Board has set three priorities for its current term of office:

TABLE 5.1

Numbers of students and professional personnel in schools

($N = 21$)

Number of Students or Professional Personnel	*f*	%*f*
Number of Students:		
Fewer than 100	1	4.8
100-199	4	19.0
200-299	1	4.8
300-399	4	19.0
400-499	3	14.3
500-599	2	9.5
600-699	3	14.3
700-799	1	4.8
800 or more	2	9.5
Mean = 446.3		
Number of Full-Time Equivalent Teachers:		
Fewer than 10	4	19.0
10-19	6	28.6
20-29	6	28.6
30 or more	5	19.0
Mean = 22.7		
Number of Full Time Equivalent Support Staff:		
Fewer than 10	14	66.7
10-19	4	19.0

20-29	1	4.8
More than 30	2	9.5
Mean = 11.3		

1. To achieve excellence in education for all its students.

2. To create a participative environment where all educational community members participate fully in the education of its students.

3. To maintain a responsible and efficient management system. (School District Education Plan, 1996-2000)

The district has been divided into a number of centralizations, based on geographic location, to aid in the management and administration of the district.

District organization. The general organization of the district is represented in Figure 5.2. The Figure indicates the general lines of accountability and support established as the district has moved to a school-based management environment and has introduced school councils to the organizational and governance pattern.

Change Influences in the District

In addition to experiencing change brought about by the separation from a county model of governance and the establishment of a new district Board of Education, Snowfields School District has been influenced by the impact of many new directions in provincial education policies, including those relating to the directions for education and adjusted funding frameworks, and by the need to restructure the district office in keeping with the changed governance status and fiscal limitations imposed on district administrative costs. Additionally, the district has experienced a change of superintendent.

In keeping with the experience of every school district in the province, Snowfields School District has experienced, and is still experiencing, a period of

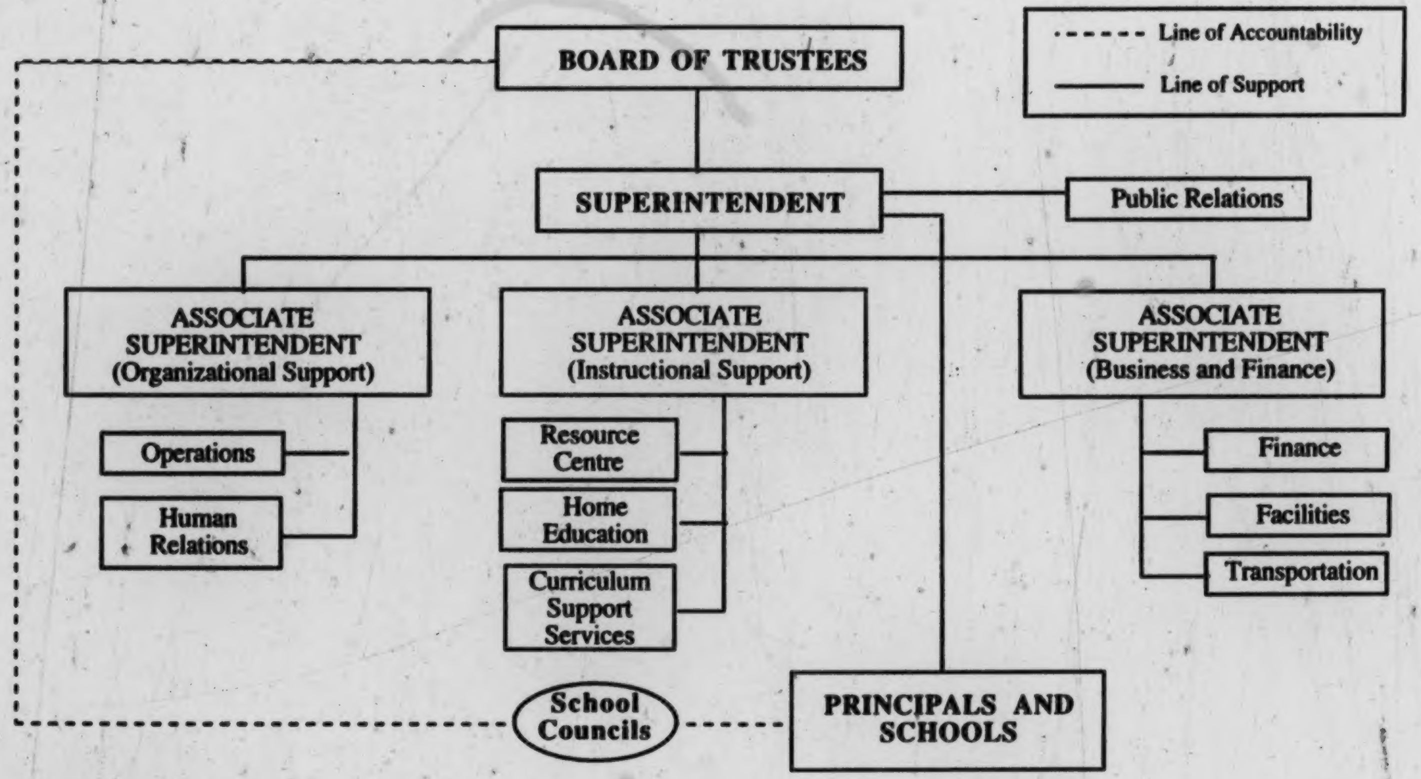

Line of Accountability
Line of Support
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SUPERINTENDENT
Public Relations
ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT (Organizational Support)
Operations
Human Relations
ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT (Instructional Support)
Resource Centre
Home Education
Curriculum Support Services
ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT (Business and Finance)
Finance
Facilities
Transportation
School Councils
PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOLS

FIGURE 5.2

School district organization

sustained and far-reaching change, the influences of which are still quite difficult to assess (Peters & Richards, 1995; Webber, 1995).

District Mission and Mandate

Snowfields School District's stated mission affirms a commitment to excellence in education for all students, and it takes as its mandate the responsibility of providing a school system organized and operated in the best interests of present and future clients.

The district's mission and mandate are underpinned by a series of 26 belief statements, including beliefs that students can experience success in learning, and that decision making regarding the needs of students and how they should be best met should be made as close to the classroom as possible (School District Education Plan, 1996-2000). The plan also aims, by the year 2000, to have staff, parents, and the community involved in the decision-making processes of schools and the district.

The focus on student achievement and on involvement in decision-making processes is a dominant and pervasive theme in the district's policies and procedures documentation, including that relating to school-based management.

The Policy Context of School-Based Management

School-Based Management

The district's approaches to school-based management are clearly and quite strongly predicated on the importance of enhancing student achievement, and on the importance of involvement with decision making by school staff, parents, and the community. For example, the district's school-based management manual, the last available annual education results report (1995/1996), the district's Education Plan, and the handbook for principals, all list these aims as two of the district's top three goals. In the case of the school-based management manual, these and other goals are presented in conjunction with the mission, mandate, learning expectations, delivery modes, and achievement standards of Alberta Education.

The importance to the district of these goals was stated by the superintendent in the district's newsmagazine,

> As our Board continues to devolve responsibility to the school level, three key ingredients will ensure our students and the learning process continue to be our district's primary focus: student-centered goals, effective leadership, and responsible participation. . . . Site-based decision making will require all those who are affected by decisions to have the opportunity to be involved in those decisions.

School Councils

School councils are perceived as an important element in the district's thrust for higher levels of student achievement. The district's policy manual states in respect of school councils,

> The Board of Trustees believes that community support for its schools enhances the quality of learning outcomes for students in the classrooms. It recognizes that School Councils have the potential to foster such community support. Therefore the Board supports and encourages the formation of School Councils for each of its schools in accordance with the School Act and the School Councils regulations.

The district's Education Plan, 1996-2000, also states that "on an ongoing basis, [Snowfields'] School Councils are encouraged to provide input regarding the development of Board policy, educational directions, and student programming." Additionally, school-based management and school councils are identified as strategies for enhancing the Plan's goal of increasing staff and community satisfaction with their involvement in decision-making processes.

Policy Frameworks

The underpinning philosophy of school-based management in Snowfields School District is stated in the district's school-based management manual,

> School-based decision making is a process for devolving responsibility for decisions to the stakeholders at the school level. School-based decision making addresses both the kinds of decisions that are made at the school and the manner in which those decisions are made. School-based decision making empowers those persons closest to the students to make decisions about the instructional programs and services for those students.

Five interrelated beliefs explicate the philosophy:

1. The primary focus should be on the learner and the learning process, enabling increased attention to instructional strategies, thus promoting greater responsiveness.

2. The school should be the focus of improvement, ensuring that meaningful improvement is focused on the unique needs and characteristics of students in each school.

3. The authority of the school should be expanded, with decisions traditionally made at jurisdiction level being placed at the level of schools.

4. Teachers need increased autonomy in decision making, providing greater control over matters such as curriculum, instruction, and the deployment of resources.

5. The central office acts as a service and support agency, as well as in an administrative capacity.

School Education Plans

An integral component of the school-based management processes in the district is the School Education Plan. The district's school-based management manual notes that "school-based decision making is an orderly process for improving the management of schools using varying degrees of shared decision making. It is not a licence for schools to do as they please." School Education Plans are clearly one device in ensuring that such licence is not taken.

The school-based management manual is also quite explicit about the prime function of the Plan,

> Since student learning is the highest priority, the focus of the School Education Plan should be to better meet the educational needs of all students and to improve the delivery programs and enhance teaching and learning.

School Education Plans are prepared in conjunction with a Budget plan, which should support the goals established in the former.

Parameters have been established for School Education Plans, and include requirements that Plans are legal, within provincial statutory and regulatory requirements, Board of Education policies, and district administrative guidelines, and that all existing contracts and employment conditions are honored. All Plans must receive the approval of the superintendent and the Board of Education.

School Education and Budget Plans form part of the cycle of the policy-driven, results-based management system instituted by Alberta Education, and which includes the provincial Three-Year Business Plan and the district Education Plan.

The Role of the District Office

The philosophy and practices of school-based management as articulated in Snowfields School District, encompass a vision of the roles of the district office. This vision, which is stated in both the district's school-based management manual and principals' handbook, perceives the role of the district's office in several key ways. They are:

1. The district office articulates a sense of purpose, direction, and teamwork for the school district.

2. The district office provides services to support the needs of each school site.

3. The district office ensures that each site operates effectively and efficiently.

The services provided by the district office in this conception of its role, apart from those related to facilities, maintenance, personnel matters, transport, and the support provided to the Board of Education, include the monitoring and supervision of program results and student achievement, the measurement of educational outcomes, policy formulation, the provision of advice and inservice to teachers and principals, devising better ways of allocating resources to schools, the provision of information to all levels of management, providing assistance to site managers so that the quality of service to students and parents can be improved, and seeking clarification and involvement from district stakeholders in defining needs.

Findings

This brief examination of the school-based management policy contexts of both Alberta Education and Snowfields School District pointed to several general findings that may be reached:

Finding #1. There was a clear articulation between the school-based management policies, including those relating to school councils, of Alberta Education, and those of Snowfields School District.

Finding #2. School-based management policies in both provincial and Snowfields School District contexts were predicated on the assumption that there will be educational benefits derived, particularly in the form of enhanced student achievement. The basis for such an assumption was not clearly stated in either context, unless it was the belief that there is a relationship between teaching, learning, decision making, and the processes of decision making at the point of decision implementation.

Finding #3. There was an assumed, though somewhat poorly articulated, relationship between school-based management and school councils in the policy documentation at both provincial and school district levels.

The Professional Context

To establish understanding about the knowledge and experience of principals and district office executive staff, both in the principalship and in the context of the implementation of school-based management, data were sought through the questionnaire and interview surveys. This information is summarized in this section, and is intended to be descriptive rather than leading to particular conclusions.

Experience

Principalship Experience

The questionnaire survey data indicated that the majority of principals currently practising in the district fall into the range of being moderately experienced (6 years or more) to highly experienced. Additionally, over 80% of principals would be considered to have had principalship experience prior to and after the implementation of school-based management in the district (see Table 5.2).

TABLE 5.2

Years of experience in the principalship
(*N* = 21)

Years of experience	*f*	%*f*
1	3	14.3
2-5	3	14.3
6-9	4	19.0
10-12	5	23.8
13-15	2	9.5
16 or more	4	19.0

Principalship Experience in Present School

Although one third of principals currently practising in the district are serving in their first year as principal of their current school, the remainder have all served as principals of their present schools since prior to the implementation of school-based management (see Table 5.3).

TABLE 5.3

Principalship experience in present school

(*N* = 21)

Years of experience	*f*	%*f*
1	7	33.3
2-5	6	28.6
6-9	3	14.3
10-12	3	14.3
13-15	1	4.8
16 or more	1	4.8

District Office Executive Staff

Extensive experience and diversity in school district leadership and management are key features of the professional experience of the district office executive staff.

The superintendent has had six years experience as a superintendent, and nine years as an associate superintendent. Each of these positions was located in a different school district. The superintendent has experience as a teacher and as a department head in a large urban high school, but has not held a principalship position. He has experience with the provincial education department and in university contexts, both focused on educational projects.

One associate superintendent is not a certificated teacher, but has extensive experience, amounting to some 25 years, in financial management in two school districts. Another associate superintendent has had 20 years experience in district and provincial education department positions, including six years as an associate superintendent in Snowfields School District. Experience as a classroom teacher and principal was gained prior to moving into the other administrative roles, and time has been spent as a curriculum and special education consultant.

The third associate superintendent has filled that role since 1980 in Snowfields School District, and was appointed as deputy superintendent in the mid-1980s. The position of acting superintendent was held for one and a half years. Principalship experience of some eight years was gained in other school districts at elementary and secondary school levels, preceded by assistant principalship experience of some three years in two different schools.

School-Based Management Knowledge and Experience

Principals' Knowledge Prior to Implementation

While a majority of principals considered themselves to be from moderately to highly knowledgeable about school-based management prior to its implementation in the district, in excess of one third had slight to no knowledge about the phenomenon prior to implementation (see Table 5.4).

TABLE 5.4

Principals' knowledge of school-based management prior to implementation

($N = 21$)

Knowledge level	*f*	%*f*
None	1	4.8
Slight	7	33.3
Moderate	6	28.6
Very Knowledgeable	3	14.3
Highly Knowledgeable	4	19.0

Principals' Experience Prior to Implementation

One third of the district's principals had no experience with school-based management prior to implementation, and no principals considered themselves very experienced or highly experienced with the phenomenon (see Table 5.5).

TABLE 5.5

Principals' experience with school-based management prior to implementation

(*N* = 21)

Experience level	*f*	%*f*
None	7	33.3
Slight	9	42.9
Moderate	4	19.0
Very Experienced	-	-
Highly Experienced	-	-
No response	1	4.8

District Office Staff

The general pattern of knowledge and experience of principals with school-based management is reflected to some extent in that of the executive staff of the district office.

The superintendent's experience dated back to 1982,

> *When I was an assistant superintendent, we were using a form of site-based management that would be roughly reflective of the Edmonton Public Schools approach.*

One associate superintendent, who had been involved with moves towards school-based management in a school district prior to taking up duties in Snowfields School District, commented that

> *up until that time, and in most school jurisdictions across the province, I think, site-based decision making with respect to financial matters, which is where decision making occurs to a certain extent, would have been around supplies and materials and those kinds of things.*

In the previous jurisdiction, knowing that school-based management was a likely development in the district, the associate superintendent spent several years examining the practical aspects of the concept, including making visits to school districts in the United States where school-based management had been implemented.

Another associate superintendent's principalship experience was gained in a highly centralized system. However, extensive experience in systems redesign in Snowfields School District in the context of the implementation of school-based management has engendered experience in pre- and post-implementation situations.

The third associate superintendent's principalship experience was gained in centralized system environments. However, the concept of school-based management was initiated by the associate superintendent, in the capacity of acting superintendent. The associate superintended noted that

> *I have friends with Edmonton Public, and I've always listened to them talk about the horrors of site-based management and the pluses of site-based management. We thought about it, we talked about it, and we never really did anything about it. When I was appointed acting superintendent, I sensed this as the direction we were headed.*

Revisiting the Literature

The review of the literature revealed an array of themes, perceptions, and assumptions about school-based management. The analysis of the policy contexts of school-based management at both provincial and school district levels conducted in this chapter facilitated a revisiting of facets of the literature in order that some themes, perceptions, and assumptions, at the theoretical level, can be compared and contrasted.

A Burgeoning and Diverse Phenomenon

The mandating of school-based management in school districts in the province can only further the emergence and spread of school-based management which was noted in the review of the literature. However, while school-based management is itself mandated by administrative fiat, the province has not mandated the form the phenomenon should take in terms of its application and implementation in school districts and schools. The philosophical basis of the concept, its policy context, and the thrusts of anticipated outcomes are clearly explicated by the province, and these explications have been translated into the school-based management policy constructs and procedures at school district level. Consequently, it can be concluded that, within clear parameters, diversity of implementation should evolve among Snowfields School District and other school districts, and among school sites in school districts. Such diversity, if it does emerge, cannot be directly attributable to a lack of conceptual and definitional clarity, and to the intentional ambiguity observed by Lindquist and Mauriel (1989), which may mask other political or philosophical considerations, in view of the unequivocal nature of the policy parameters established at provincial and school district level.

Structural Elements

Herman and Herman (1993) identified three structural elements common in school-based management endeavors as (a) the shift, exchange, and balance of decision-making authority; (b) that decisions should be made or influenced by those who are impacted by or who have implementional responsibility for them; and (c) the empowerment of principals, teachers, and community.

Each of these structural elements is clearly present in both the provincial and school district school-based management policies. The devolution of decision-making authority to school districts and schools is made at the cost to school districts and schools of increased levels of accountability, most notably in the form of increased student assessment and public accountability for outcomes. The exchange and rebalancing of authority in this way is predicated, to some extent, on the other two structural elements identified by Herman and Herman.

Change and Turbulence

Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz (1990b) have observed that phenomena such as school-based management frequently emerge at times of stress and turbulence. While this is demonstrably true in the context of developments in Alberta, care needs to be taken in accurately ascribing causality in this situation. School-based management has emerged at a time of significant educational change and turbulence in the province, but not because of the change and turbulence. Rather, school-based management policy has been clearly articulated as one of an extensive series of changes and redirections in education in the province, and as such is but one measure among many contributing to meeting what is perceived by the provincial government as a serious financial crisis. Hence, change and turbulence are being contributed to by the advent of school-based management, rather than the phenomenon emerging as a result of such change and turbulence.

Student Achievement

The policy developments described in this chapter provided a potent example of David's (1995/1996) assertion that most of the reasons advanced for the initiation of school-based management "are cloaked in the language of increasing student achievement" (p. 5). This precept permeates policy statements at both provincial and district level.

Driving Influences

The forces driving school-based management, and other redirections in education, present a confusing picture. While the overt motivation of deficit reductions and economic globalization are extant, and there appear to be many of the propelling forces identified in the literature review by Lawton (1992) and Weiler (1993), the underpinning motivations and principles, as far as they can be discerned, do not form a cohesive rationale. Peters and Richards' (1995) observation that the changes reflect a mixture of neoliberalism and neoconservatism has been noted. Such duality may also be observed in policy directions which, on one hand, espouse libertarian values such as the right of choice, while simultaneously imposing, for example, quite firm control of curriculum and establishing centrally devised educational standards. The clarity of underpinning motivations is further diminished by the exacerbation of the natural tensions that exist between the forces of centralization, decentralization, and recentralization. This is clearly demonstrated in the implementation of policies of decentralization, local control, and consequent accountability, while simultaneously imposing centralized control over many aspects of educational functions. Peters and Richards, citing Lisal (1995), have observed that in the context of developments in the province, "it was getting difficult to sort out principles from clichés" (p. 24). This appears to be no less true in respect of the particular context of school-based management at the provincial level.

Design Choices

While Alberta Education has not prescribed the particular form of school-based management to be implemented in and across school districts, Snowfields School District has, however, put in place a policy and implementation structure which reflected what Mohrman and Wohlstetter (1994) have termed "design choices" (pp. 12-13). Accountability to the district office has not been removed, as it cannot be, and nor have schools been given freedom of action to move beyond established policy and procedural boundaries. Within the design choices made by the district are notions of leadership by principals, student-focused programs, participation by staff, parents, and community in decision making, collaboration, efficient and effective use of resources, and accountability.

District Roles and Leadership

The recasting of roles by district superintendents and other school district leaders, and the realignment of roles of district offices and the types and styles of support provided to schools in school-based management environments, was a distinct theme emerging from the review of the literature. Policy statements reflected this development in Snowfields School District. In addition to realignments brought about by a commitment to the tenets of school-based management, these processes have been given impetus by changes to provincial funding frameworks to school jurisdictions, and by provincially imposed limitations on district office administrative costs.

Summary

In this chapter, the provincial and school district policy contexts, including implementation mechanisms, of school-based management have been examined, as have the professional contexts of its implementation in Snowfields School District. The phenomenon is but one element in a range of changes and redirections in education being driven by an array of political, economic, and philosophical considerations in the province. The general nature and educational governance pattern of the district were reviewed, and some general findings were made which reflected the levels of articulation between provincial and district policies. The examination of the professional context of the implementation of school-based management included a review of relevant experience and knowledge by principals and district office executive staff. The chapter concluded with a brief revisitation of the literature to identify some elements which emerged from the literature review which can be aligned with elements of the policy contexts at provincial and district levels.

In Chapter 6, the school-based management implementation processes employed in Snowfields School District are examined, together with their overall impact and influence in the district, as are the general impact and influence in the district of the implementation.

Summary of Findings

Finding #1. There was a clear articulation between the school-based management policies, including those relating to school councils, of Alberta Education, and those of Snowfields School District.

Finding #2. School-based management policies in both provincial and Snowfields School District contexts were predicated on the assumption that there will be educational benefits derived, particularly in the form of enhanced student achievement. The basis for such an assumption was not clearly stated in either context, unless it was the belief that there is a relationship between teaching, learning, decision making, and the processes of decision making at the point of decision implementation.

Finding #3. There was an assumed, though somewhat poorly articulated, relationship between school-based management and school councils in the policy documentation at both provincial and school district levels.

CHAPTER 6

THE IMPLEMENTATION AND INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT IN SNOWFIELDS SCHOOL DISTRICT

Introduction

Chapter 6 is the first of three chapters which examine particular facets of school-based management in Snowfields School District. The chapter provides an analysis of the implementational framework of school-based management in the district, thereby examining the contexts in which the general and specific research questions of the study were addressed. Eisner (1991) observed that "the writer starts with qualities and ends with words. The reader starts with words and ends with qualities" (p. 22). The challenge for the researcher in these chapters is to interpret the data and present those interpretations in a manner which is faithful to the data, which contributes to an understanding of school-based management in the school district, and which also possibly contributes to some enhanced understanding of the processes and influences of school-based management generally.

The rationale for undertaking an examination, in this chapter, of the implementation and general influence of the phenomenon in the school district is twofold. First, the relationships between school-based management, the quality of school programs and student achievement must be examined within their contextual circumstances. The review of the literature indicated that school-based management is a matter of some complexity which involves critical matter of organizational design (e.g., Mohrman & Wohlstetter, 1994), including that of school districts. Consequently, implementation processes are shaped by, and help shape, the district's philosophical stance towards school-based management, and influence the philosophical perspectives of individual schools.

Second, the nature of any organizational redesign will have ramifications for the potential and actual influence of school-based management on the operations of individual schools and on those of the district. Sackney and Dibski (1994) have observed that

> there is a tendency for those in charge to hang on to the old values and ways of doing things, since these approaches have worked in the past. It is difficult to change values, beliefs, norms and assumptions based on the old paradigm . . . the traditional rational bureaucratic organization may still be well and active even though structural changes have taken place. (p. 106)

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first examines the perceptions of principals and district office staff about the implementation of school-based management in the district. The second examines the overall impact and influence of school-based management in the district, in the perceptions of principals and district office staff, and at a fairly early stage in the post-implementation period.

Data Sources

Three sources of data were used in reaching conclusions about the implementation and general impact and influence of school-based management in the school district.

Questionnaire Survey

Conceptual and analytical structures. The items contained in Sections B and C of the questionnaire survey instrument formed the key conceptual and analytical structures for this facet of the study. Section B contained 28 items and also included invitations to respondents to comment on their responses in two of the items, and to comment on any matter pertaining to that section of the instrument. Section C contained 40 items and one invitation to make open responses to any matter pertaining to that section. All of the items in both sections were drawn from the contents of the literature.

Directed and Open Responses. Responses in both directed and open formats in the questionnaire instrument provided a useful source of data. Open responses included unsolicited comments added by respondents in both sections under examination in this chapter.

Interview Data

The perceptions of principals about the implementation of school-based management drawn from the questionnaire survey data were considerably enriched by the perceptions conveyed by principals in interview. Interviews also formed the key source of data for determining the perceptions of district office personnel.

Documentation

Documentary sources did not provide any substantial insights in this part of the inquiry. As the implementation of school-based management in the district is at a comparatively early stage, there is little evaluative information available in respect of the implementation processes, and the influences and impacts in schools and the district. Documentation such as the district's school-based management handbook provided either philosophical rationales, examined in Chapter 5, or information about technical matters. The latter are important in school and district operations, but are not of particular relevance to this study.

The Implementation of School-Based Management

District Orientations

Background

A perception existed in Snowfields School District that the district was well placed to initiate school-based management. There are two main reasons attributed for this. First, the influence of a past superintendent,

> *We had a superintendent before all this began who was a sort of a futurist; he was a forward-thinking person, and he had this scenario in mind ten years ago.*

> *He had a vision of the future that encouraged all of us, and we were well prepared by his instruction through leadership for what has occurred.* (Principal)

Second, the district had devolved a considerable amount of responsibility to schools over a period of time. A principal observed,

> *I think our district has given principals a fair bit of decision-making autonomy already compared to other districts. This [school-based management] was just one more step, and just gave us a little more latitude in terms of decision making.*

The effect of these two factors was, in the words of a principal,

> *I think our system was probably one of the most ready in the province to move into this site-based management business.*

The Edmonton Effect

Edmonton Public School District has been a lighthouse district, in North America and beyond, in the relocation of decision-making authority from central office to schools during the past two decades. There is evidence that the experiences of that school district had influenced perceptions in Snowfields School District about school-based management. An associate superintendent noted that

> *I would suggest that Edmonton had a very strong influence on our model, very much so.*

This view was supported by a principal,

> *There are a lot of principals who have friends in the Edmonton system and saw some things that the Edmonton principals were able to do that felt we weren't able to do.*

However, the influence of Edmonton Public School District's experiences was not uniform or necessarily positive, for example,

> *Some of us knew principals who were very happy and some of us knew principals who were desperately unhappy.* (Principal)

Finding #4. There was some familiarity in the district with the philosophy and practices of school-based management prior to implementation. This was due to the district's existing devolutionary policies and practices, and to some awareness of developments in the Edmonton Public School District.

Implementation Processes

The Genesis of the Implementation

A combination of prior experience in the district, an awareness of developments in the Edmonton Public School District and other school districts, and developments at the provincial level appear to have provided a basis upon which implementation in the district could commence. An associate superintendent was appointed as acting superintendent, and the process of implementation commenced under his leadership,

> *I was appointed acting superintendent . . . and it was going to be my responsibility to initiate and take on site-based management.*

A principal was appointed as acting associate superintendent, and was given the particular responsibility of developing draft policies and procedures for the implementation of school-based management in the district.

Provincial Influence

The knowledge that the provincial government intended to mandate the implementation of school-based management in all school districts in the province, and the eventual promulgation of that mandate, did have some influence on the decision to implement school-based management in Snowfields School District, although the degree of causality is obscure,

> *I feel it was mandated, and that was that. [Mandated by] the province and, of course, the superintendent following in line with provincial regulations.* (Principal)

> *I think the province's move was probably the motivating force, although it has been, in part, something that this system had toyed with for a while.* (Associate Superintendent)

> *The main force behind the implementation would have been the provincial mandate.* (Associate Superintendent)

However, both the district superintendent and an associate superintendent did not perceive the provincial mandate as the singular motivating force in the district,

> *They [the province] have not led; they're following so that there are no good models that they are prepared to promote, to share. We have none of that information.* (Superintendent)

> *In looking at the provincial direction, I think we became of the view that we weren't going to really debate whether or not site-based management was the most appropriate way to move a school jurisdiction in the way it was to manage its affairs, but more so to try and see how efficiently we could manage it underneath that system. Once it was accomplished, when the province and others evaluate site-based management, they can at least be evaluating a system that has tried to work towards implementation in its finest form, as opposed to trying to evaluate a system that has been doing something reluctantly.*
> (Associate Superintendent)

Finding #5. The anticipated provincial mandate was a very important, but not exclusive, element in the decision to implement school-based management in the district.

Principals' Motivation and Initiatives

Increasing interest in the concept and a desire to build on existing conditions by principals also provided considerable motivation for the move to school-based management in the district. The perceptions of principals of school-based management, however, were not uniformly positive (see Table 6.1).

TABLE 6.1

Principals' pre-implementation perceptions of school-based management were positive

($N = 21$)

Response	*f*	%*f*
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	2	9.5
Neutral	2	9.5
Agree	9	42.9
Strongly Agree	8	38.1

These data were supported by comments of principals,

> *Originally, [the initiative] had come from principals, and we had kept asking for more. I shouldn't say all; we were torn. There was a division. Some wanted it and some didn't.*

> *My perception is that most people were in favor of it, and in some cases that people were very anxious for it to move even faster than it was.*

> *Our views were varied, I think it's fair to say, and our attitudes towards site-based management ranged from some who were eager to get on with it, liked the concept, to some who thought we should do everything that we could to avoid having to go in that direction.*

> *I was not enthusiastic. I think a lot of principals felt that this would open the door for a lot of decision making on their part. I thought that it would have its use, but I was worried that the time expended might not be worth the benefit one would gain from site-based management.*

The perceptions of principals of school-based management are clearly a potent factor in the successful implementation of the concept, and the study probed as to why a dichotomy of views existed. In responding to questionnaire items about their perceptions of school-based management, principals were invited to offer comments about their perceptions. Nineteen principals offered comments and, while reflecting the dichotomy of perceptions indicated in Table 6.1, the comments did provide some limited insights as to why such perceptions were held,

> *I believe that those closest to the situation, those taking the responsibility, should have the power.*

> *I had mixed feelings. In some ways having more authority was very positive, but with the budget allocations we could start to move backwards. We had a fair degree of autonomy prior to formal implementation. However, I was concerned as to what impact full school-based management would have on staffing requirements.*

> *I believed (sic) that having more control over staffing, budgeting etc. would benefit my school. Decisions made close to the source are usually good decisions*. (Respondent's emphasis)

> *Lack of information from the province which mandated the change, and suspicions that the change was for financial and political reasons and not an educational rationale.*

> *School-based management promised to give school personnel more autonomy, and more responsibility. It seemed to be a great opportunity for creative, innovative program planning.*

Finding #6. A majority of principals were generally positive about school-based management prior to its implementation, although some principals held strong reservations. Reasons underpinning principals' perceptions were diverse, and included motivation and leadership by principals, a welcoming of the opportunity for more local control, autonomy, and creativity, a wariness of the effects of change, and suspicions about the motivation for the introduction of school-based management.

District Office Staff Perceptions

Perceptions of school-based management by district office staff prior to implementation appear to have been generally positive also, although, in common with the principals' cohort, reservations and concerns were held by some. The acting superintendent initiated the implementation in the belief that it was a timely and appropriate action, and in response to both provincial directions for education and increasing representations from principals. An associate superintendent had undertaken extensive research on the matter, and became enthused about its potential,

> *I think I became a converted firm believer that an organization can be run this way, and it can be run just as effectively, if not more effectively. I think the biggest component of this has been that it's going to change, or is changing, attitudes amongst people.*

Another associate superintendent saw potential but did hold some reservations,

> *My perception of it was that it would certainly provide people with many more opportunities to make decisions at the school level. My concern when I thought about it prior to implementation was that we would get very different kinds of experiences for children within the same jurisdiction, so that there was not going to be the same sense of standardization or similar experiences that would lead to a sense of equity between the schools. Another concern that I had was that schools might become perhaps more insular and that there would not be the same sense of cooperation between the central services and people working at the school level. You get this kind of fractionating and a breakdown in the cohesiveness of the system.*

Finding #7. District office staff were generally positive about school-based management prior to implementation, although some reservations were held which were focused largely on the effects of the processes on the standardization of services, and on system cohesiveness.

District Implementation Action

With the appointment of an acting associate superintendent who had been given the specific responsibility of taking forward the concept of school-based management in the district, implementation processes advanced with some rapidity. A committee of principals was struck under the leadership of the associate superintendent, research of the school-based management literature was undertaken, consultations were held with staff of other school districts in the province, including Edmonton Public School District, models were developed, and consultations were held with principals and district office staff. The district's school-based management manual was formally released to schools at the beginning of April, 1995. Education Plans from schools were provided to the district superintendent for approval by the middle of May, 1995, and transmitted to the Board of Education for approval by mid-June of the same year. Operational implementation commenced at the beginning of the 1995/1996 school year.

The Role of the Board of Education

Although the documentation in relation to the Board of Education's role in the implementation was sparse, there are indications that the Board's role was confined to general support of the concept and its implementation, policy approval, and endorsement of Education Plans. The Board received a report from its Education Services Committee at a meeting in April, 1994, with a subsequent motion carried that the Board approve, in principle, the concept of site-based management, and that implementation action be initiated as soon as possible. Snowfields School District's Annual Report of 1993/1994 noted that "the concept of site-based management was approved in principle, with implementation to commence in the 1995/1996 school year." The acting associate superintendent commented that

> *basically it went to the Board for approval when the document was complete and the numbers were there and the philosophy was there. The Board was certainly kept informed as to what was happening, but they did not play a major role outside the final approval of the school budgets as part of the budget package.*

Perceptions of the Implementation Processes

Consultation and Involvement

A majority of principals who offered opinions agreed or strongly agreed that they were consulted by the district in the decision to implement school-based management, and that principals were involved in the preparation of the district's school-based management policies (see Table 6.2). It is possible that the data about the perceptions of principals were influenced by the number of principals who are either in their first or the early years of their principalship experience (see Tables 5.2 and 5.3).

TABLE 6.2

Implementation consultation with and involvement of principals

(*N* = 21)

Response	Consultation	Involvement
Strongly Disagree	1 (4.8)	-
Disagree	-	-
Neutral	4 (19.0)	1 (4.8)
Agree	10 (47.6)	10 (47.6)
Strongly Agree	5 (23.8)	9 (42.9)
No Response	1 (4.8)	1 (4.8)

Note. Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

The vehicle for consultation was essentially the committee of principals under the leadership of the acting associate superintendent,

> *Initially, all of the principals were involved with the associate superintendent to develop the book, the guide for site-based management.* (Principal)
>
> *All the principals met a great many times. We wrote the book on it for the district, together with an associate superintendent who worked with us. The*

system embraced the concept, invited the principals in it to be part of setting it up for the system, and away we went. (Principal)

Finding #8. Principals perceived that they were consulted about the implementation of school-based management, and that they were involved in the preparation of the district's policies and procedures.

Training and Inservice

A majority of principals who offered opinions agreed or strongly agreed that training and inservice were provided by the district, although eight principals either disagreed or offered no opinion. Eighteen of the principals who offered opinions agreed or strongly agreed that they perceived such programs as necessary, while only just over half of principals offering opinions perceived such programs as effective, although nine principals offered no opinion on this matter (see Table 6.3).

TABLE 6.3

Provision, necessity, and effectiveness of training and inservice

(*N* = 21)

Response	Provision	Necessity	Effectiveness
Strongly Disagree	-	-	-
Disagree	3 (14.3)	-	-
Neutral	5 (23.8)	2 (9.5)	8 (38.1)
Agree	11 (52.4)	10 (47.6)	9 (42.9)
Strongly Agree	1 (4.8)	8 (38.1)	2 (9.5)
No Response	1 (4.8)	1 (4.8)	2 (9.5)

Note: Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

A principal commented that these particular items in the questionnaire survey "assume that training programs were provided." This comment illustrated the potential problem, identified in Chapter 4, of respondents considering that the questionnaire survey items contained unstated assumptions because the content of all items was drawn from the literature. However, Table 6.3 is illustrative of the fact that the principal's observation, in this instance, was not a major concern for the study.

The perceptions of a majority of principals about training and inservice were not shared by district office staff. The district superintendent, even though he had not been appointed at the time of implementation, had not developed a positive perception of the district's school-based management training and inservice endeavors. He further observed that

> *I would suggest that the professional development of our school-based leadership, period, has been inadequate. There is no coordinated program or coordinated set of requirements.*

An associate superintendent held a similar perspective,

> *I think it was very, very limited and inadequate. It's been a process in this district where we've almost been learning as we go. It's almost like an on-the-job training process as opposed to trying to provide some inservice.*

Another associate superintendent, when asked if principals had received inservice training about school-based management, commented,

> *Not really. We had some intensive training. We had a retreat and the associate superintendent got three or four principals from Edmonton to come down and sort of explain to our principals what it was all about, go over some of the paper documentation that was required, and how the budget was expended, and how decisions were arrived at.*

The timeline for implementation was seen by an associate superintendent as one factor inhibiting training and inservice programs,

> *In order to get the Education Plans and budgeting done, we needed to move pretty quickly, and so we missed a major component of the implementation, from my perspective, and that was an effective inservice program on the whole concept of site-based management and what its implications were and are, and how to make it work effectively. Many of them [principals] had not sensed the full ramification of what they would be expected to deal with.*

Finding #9. While principals and district office staff perceived that training and inservice about school-based management was necessary and provided, only slightly more than half of the principals who offered opinions perceived that such programs were effective, and district office staff did not perceive that the programs were effective. Inexperience in the district with the phenomenon as it was implemented, and the accelerated rate of implementation appeared to be the reasons for the negative perceptions held.

Foci of Training and Inservice

The review of the literature suggested areas on which the delivery of training and inservice programs could be appropriately focused as part of implementation processes of school-based management. The perceptions of principals of Snowfields School District about the inclusion of these areas in district training and inservice programs are summarized in Table 6.4.

These data indicate that in the focus areas of organizational management, technical skills, long- and short-term planning, communications, and the management of change, a majority of principals who offered opinions perceived that these were present in programs. In the areas of negotiating and leadership skills, small group dynamics, and human resource management, a majority of principals who offered opinions perceived that these were not present.

TABLE 6.4

Foci of training and inservice

(*N* = 21)

Focus Area	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Response
Organizational management	-	2 (9.5)	5 (23.8)	10 (47.6)	-	4 (19.0)
Technical skills	-	4 (19.0)	3 (14.3)	9 (42.9)	1 (4.8)	4 (19.0)
Planning (long/short term)	-	1 (4.8)	5 (23.8)	9 (42.9)	2 (9.5)	4 (19.0)
Negotiating skills	8 (38.1)	2 (9.5)	8 (38.1)	-	-	3 (14.3)
Leadership skills	2 (9.5)	3 (14.3)	10 (47.6)	2 (9.5)	-	4 (19.0)
Small group dynamics	3 (14.3)	6 (28.6)	7 (33.3)	2 (9.5)	-	3 (14.3)
Human resource management	2 (9.5)	4 (19.0)	8 (38.1)	3 (14.3)	-	4 (19.0)
Communications	1 (4.8)	3 (14.3)	7 (33.3)	7 (33.3)	-	3 (14.3)
Management of change	2 (9.5)	3 (14.3)	5 (23.8)	8 (38.1)	-	3 (14.3)

Note. Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

Goals of School-Based Management Implementation

In response to the statement that they understood the district's goals in introducing school-based management, 19 principals agreed or strongly agreed that they did (see Table 6.5).

TABLE 6.5

Principals' understanding of goals of school-based management

(*N* = 21)

Response	*f*	%*f*
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	2	9.5
Neutral	-	-
Agree	16	76.2
Strongly Agree	3	14.3

In view of the clearly enunciated policy and goal statements at provincial and district levels, examined in Chapter 5, that the enhancement of student achievement is a key goal of school-based management, these data lead to the conclusion that principals were aware of the assumption, in the statements at least, of a linkage between the phenomenon of school-based management and student achievement.

Finding #10. Principals understood the stated goals of school-based management prior to its implementation.

Specific Situations in Schools

The review of the literature indicated with some clarity that the successful implementation of school-based management took some account of the specific circumstances of each school, and that the pace of change and implementation would need to take some cognizance of such specificity. The perceptions of principals who offered opinions were almost evenly divided in respect of the implementation taking account of the specific circumstances of their schools, with four principals either not responding or not offering opinions, possibly because they were not involved with their present schools at the time of implementation. In contrast, only three principals agreed or strongly agreed that the pace of implementation was attuned to their specific school contexts, with over half of the sample of principals offering no opinion in this area (see Table 6.6).

TABLE 6.6

School contexts and rate of implementation

($N = 21$)

Response	School Contexts	Rate of Implementation
Strongly Disagree	1 (4.8)	2 (9.5)
Disagree	7 (33.3)	5 (23.8)
Neutral	3 (14.3)	10 (47.6)
Agree	8 (38.1)	2 (9.5)
Strongly Agree	1 (4.8)	1 (4.8)
No Response	1 (4.8)	1 (4.8)

Note. Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

Finding #11. There was clear division in principals' perceptions about school-based management being attuned to their specific school contexts, and most principals did not perceive that the rate of implementation took cognizance of such contexts. The study has indicated that the decision to implement was taken by the district for the district, and that individual schools were not given options about the nature and rate of implementation.

Trust and Anxiety

Principals' perceptions of their level of trust in the motives for the introduction of school-based management in the district were sought in the questionnaire survey. Thirteen principals disagreed or strongly disagreed that there was mistrust of such motives, while three agreed or strongly agreed that there was. Five principals did not offer an opinion on this matter. Similarly, principals were asked about their own level of anxiety or confusion about the implementation of school-based management. Ten of the district's principals disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were anxious and confused, while seven agreed, and four offered no opinion.

The district superintendent demonstrated some mistrust of the motives of the province in implementing school-based management, linking government reductions in education expenditure and the limiting of expenditure on administration to the implementation. He observed that

> *if I was a strategist for the province and I was going to make a twelve and one half percent cutback in total education funding, and I knew that there were half a million students in the province who had parents attached to them, and I didn't want to upset the electorate too much, I would do everything that I could to cut in every area of education without impacting the classroom. So I can tell you that part of this, if not most of the entire strategy, was based on how do we take the percentage out of the total education budget without impacting the classroom. And it has done exactly that.*

Finding #12. Principals and district office staff generally demonstrated trust about the implementation of school-based management, although there was also evidence of some mistrust and anxiety being present. Indications emerged from the data suggesting that suspicion of political motives at provincial level underpinned some mistrust.

Resistance

Fullan (1991) observed that "the adage 'where there's a will there's a way' is not always an apt one for the planning of educational change. There is an abundance of wills, but they get *in* the way rather than pointing the way" (p. 96, author's emphasis). The reality of resistance to educational change has received some attention in the literature (e.g., Bailey, 1994; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). The perceptions of principals about the presence of resistance to the implementation of school-based management by various groups were examined in the study (see Table 6.7).

These data indicated that, in general, a majority of the district's principals who offered opinions did not perceive major resistance from the Board of Education, district office personnel, or parents to the implementation. However, over half of the responding principals who offered opinions agreed that there was some resistance from their colleagues in the principalship. The latter data tended to support the perceptions of principals noted earlier in this chapter that principals' perceptions about school-based management were not uniformly positive. In respect of resistance from teachers, some ambivalence surrounded the perceptions of principals, with nearly half offering no opinion or not responding to this item. However, seven of the principals who responded disagreed or strongly disagreed that teachers had been a source of resistance to the implementation of school-based management. Ambivalence was attached to principals' perceptions of resistance from the provincial teachers' association, with 13 principals either not responding, or not offering an opinion.

Less ambivalence in this latter aspect was indicated in the perceptions of district office personnel. One described a situation where a school had decided to eliminate an administrative position in favor of additional professional support of other school roles, and met very strong opposition from the teachers' association. Further, an associate superintendent observed that, within the teachers' association,

> *there has been concern with the degree to which school-based management has had an impact on the role of the school administration at all levels.*

This concern, however, was not characterized as either overt or covert resistance.

TABLE 6.7

Principals' perceptions of sources of resistance to implementation

(*N* = 21)

Source	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Response
Board of Education	2 (9.5)	10 (47.6)	7 (33.3)	-	-	2 (9.5)
District Office	3 (14.3)	12 (57.1)	4 (19.0)	1 (4.8)	-	1 (4.8)
Principals	5 (23.8)	3 (14.3)	2 (9.5)	10 (47.6)	-	1 (4.8)
Teachers	5 (23.8)	2 (9.5)	8 (38.1)	3 (14.3)	1 (4.8)	2 (9.5)
Parents	4 (19.0)	7 (33.3)	6 (28.6)	2 (9.5)	-	2 (9.5)
Teachers' association	3 (14.3)	2 (9.5)	10 (47.6)	2 (9.5)	1 (4.8)	3 (14.3)

Note. Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

Finding #13. Over half of the principals who offered opinions perceived that there was resistance to the implementation of school-based management from their principal colleagues, but principals did not perceive generally that there was notable resistance from elsewhere. Some district office staff perceived that there was resistance from the teachers' association. Possible reasons for principals' perceptions of resistance by other principals were cited in Finding #6.

School Councils

All but one of the schools in the district had established school councils, according to their principals. As both the School Act and the provincial and district policy statements in respect of school councils are not precise in indicating the responsibilities that can or should be accepted by councils, principals were asked to indicate the types of responsibilities carried by councils at their particular school sites. Responses are summarized in Table 6.8.

It is noteworthy that contributions to the development of School Education Plans and to general school policy were the most common responsibilities held by school councils in the district, in addition to the more traditional roles of fund raising and general support activities for the school.

Involvement of school councils in the processes of school-based management was a clear expectation in the district. The acting associate superintendent commented that

> *in the inservices with principals, it was stated quite clearly that I would expect community involvement in the goal setting.*

An associate superintendent also commented that

> *I would say that is a very strong emphasis within our particular philosophy here, and it's expected that principals will work with their staff members as well as with representatives of the community, particularly the parent community. The expectation is that they will be involved in the entire planning process and that each school will have an active and engaged school council.*

TABLE 6.8

Responsibilities of school councils

(*N* = 108)

Responsibility	*f*
Contribution to School Education Plan	15
Policy development	15
Fund raising	15
General assistance to school	15
Communications with parents and community	13
Financial management/Advice on budget	12
Providing advice to principal	3
Other (e.g., volunteer program, hot lunch program, playground development)	20

In the words of another associate superintendent,

> *They weren't consulted on the decision to implement, but have been extensively involved in the implementation processes.*

However, understanding the nature of the involvement of school councils in school-based management processes became somewhat problematic when these data were compared to responses from principals in the interview survey,

> *The parents who are part of the school council want to know what's going on. They don't really want to have a say in decision making. They just simply want to know how the moneys are being distributed, and they will have questions on how the staffing is being deployed. They will have questions, and may provide input, but they really leave the decisions up to the school administration.*
>
> *I really do not believe that they play a large role in the decision making, and I really don't believe that they want to. I believe that they want to be consulted, they want to be heard, and they want the school to make the decision.*
>
> *We showed them the goals that we had put together as being important to us, and invited them to add goals or to make comments. Generally, I found that*

> *they just wanted to listen and to talk about what we had done, and very seldom did they provide input as to new goals. So it seems to me that the school council just want to be informed as to what the school is doing.*

However, these indications were not uniform,

> *I think of one small rural school where there is, in essence, a management committee on which several parent representatives sit, along with the staff and principal. The principal still holds the last chance decision-making authority, but the majority of decisions are made on in-school policies and on budget determinations by that committee.* (Associate Superintendent)

Another principal commented that

> *we had a lot of positive and active parental involvement in the total operation of the school before the advent of site-based management. Most of our parents do not want to be involved in site-based management.*

The study sought the perceptions of principals about the presence of resistance towards the involvement of parents in the management of schools in the district. In the cohort of 21 principals, 12 disagreed or strongly disagreed that such resistance was present, while nine principals agreed or strongly agreed that it was. While perceptions of the source of such resistance were not sought, the division in the perceptions of the principals reflected the unclear picture of parent and school council participation in district school-based management implementation.

Finding #14. Although the roles and influences of school councils in the district's school-based management environment were difficult to clearly discern and assess, principals and district office staff perceived that councils do have roles in the processes, but that the nature of such roles was unclear, or was still developing, and appeared to be particularly sensitive to the specific nature of each school site.

The Impact and Influence of School-Based Management

This section of the chapter continues the examination of the contextual circumstances of the implementation of school-based management in Snowfields School District by exploring the overall impact and influence of the phenomenon.

Areas of Impact and Influence

Decision-Making Areas

Figure 2.3 illustrated the finding of the review of the literature that the most common areas of devolved responsibilities in school-based management contexts were centered on budget, personnel, and curriculum matters. Principals of Snowfields School District responded to a survey item which sought their perceptions of their responsibilities in the areas of the allocation of school finances, staffing, curriculum, and school programs. These responses are presented in Table 6.9.

TABLE 6.9

Principals' perceptions of decision-making areas

(*N* = 21)

Area	School Finance	Staffing	Curriculum	Programs
Strongly Disagree	-	-	2 (9.5)	1 (4.8)
Disagree	1 (4.8)	2 (9.5)	6 (28.6)	3 (14.3)
Neutral	-	6 (28.6)	6 (28.6)	3 (14.3)
Agree	11 (52.4)	9 (42.9)	7 (33.3)	12 (57.1)
Strongly Agree	9 (42.9)	4 (19.0)	-	2 (9.5)

Note. Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

The data indicated that in the allocation of finances, 19 principals perceived that decision-making authority was held at the school level. Majorities of principals who offered opinions agreed or strongly agreed that authority was also held in matters of staffing and school program. Slightly more than half of the principals who offered opinions disagreed or strongly disagreed that authority was held in curriculum matters.

Staffing. A principal observed, in respect of staffing, that

> *there are still some union and contractual constraints.*

However, the district superintendent, commenting on teachers' association opposition to a school's attempt to replace an assistant principal's position, noted that

> *the union perspective is that they don't want to diminish or lose those kinds of roles for their membership, and I'm telling them, "I don't see what the problem is. As far as I am concerned, you can have one assistant or ninety-five in the school, I don't care, it's not my issue." They are arguing that this is in fact a district issue, that they [staff] should be district appointed. They're actually arguing for a centralist point of view.*

In terms of staffing costs, the superintendent also observed that, under school-based management, there was, in his perception, a direct linkage between such costs and funding available for school programs,

> *We're finding that the Board is in the very peculiar position of arguing constraints so that there will be money available for a variety of things. The teachers' association argues for more money. That will come straight out of the school; they affect their own ability to operate inside the school. So as they are arguing for more money, they understand as well that it means that they are damaging their ability to deliver the product. And we're sitting there and arguing for constraints so they'll be able to do better what it is they need to do.*

Curriculum. The provincial mandating of curriculum appeared to be a generally accepted fact in principals' perceptions of their authority in matters of curriculum. A principal commented that such authority is held

> *within Alberta Education constraints.*

Another observed that curriculum is

> *still government mandated; some authority is ours.*

However, the curriculum mandate was not universally perceived as a major restriction on the authority of the principal. A principal commented that

> *this school has changed the curriculum in major ways and put pressure on the district office to validate that through the Board, and to stand up for us in areas where we are pretty liberal with interpretations of the curriculum document. We've got limitations, and that's a good thing in some ways. There are ways in which I can see the possibility of problems if there isn't mandated curriculum.*

Finding #15. The perceptions of principals were that, under school-based management, budgetary authority is held at the school, with less authority held in matters of staffing and school programs. Principals perceptions indicated some uncertainty about curriculum authority among those who offered opinions.

Autonomy, Flexibility, and Initiative

Seventeen of the district's principals agreed or strongly agreed that, under school-based management, the school had increased autonomy and flexibility, with only one disagreeing, and three offering no opinion. Fifteen principals agreed or strongly agreed that schools were better able to take initiatives, with one disagreeing, and five offering no opinion.

However, the levels of autonomy, flexibility, and initiative being demonstrated by principals were unclear. Initiatives were beginning to emerge, for example, of flexibility and creativity in the use of staffing allocations, in using funds to obtain consultancy services, and in making provisions for the needs of Aboriginal students. In addition, the pre-existing organizational culture, and the levels of previously devolved responsibility, seemed to have aided the transition to school-based management,

> *the organizational culture, rather than being an inhibitor, was a contributor to it [school-based management] being acceptable and adoptable as a philosophy.* (Principal)

However, district office staff expressed a range of perceptions about the ability or willingness of schools to be flexible and creative, and to take risks. The district superintendent believed that the district did encourage principals in this regard, but also observed that

> *we still, I think, have principals who don't believe us.*

An associate superintendent held a differing perception,

> *At this point in time, I don't see that encouragement as being at the forefront. Risk taking is something that some people have difficulty with, and that's going to be part of this whole transition. Those who are not risk takers are going to find it very hard to survive in this environment as opposed to the risk takers.*

Another associate superintendent considered that the levels of accountability inhibited risk taking by principals,

> *I think the balance of that [risk taking] is the constant expectation of accountability and that we've become very goal focused, and that sometimes, while it should encourage school principals to be more risk taking, I'm not sure that they're at the point where they feel confident enough about their role that they will start to reach out into that risk taking.*

The effects of reductions in education expenditure, and the concomitant need for system restructuring, were perceived by one associate superintendent as making organizational initiatives at the school level an imperative. He further commented that

> *if schools are going to continue to operate administratively the same as they've always operated in the past, they are not going to be able to meet the needs that they need to meet under site-based management. They too are in the position of having to make the necessary organizational change within the traditional school in order to meet the needs that they are now having laid on their desks.*

Finding #16. Principals and district office staff perceived that, under school-based management, school autonomy and flexibility, and the ability to take initiatives had increased. However, patterns of responses to this ability were mixed at this stage of the implementation, and perceptions existed of some resistance to this ability.

Constraints

In addressing the autonomy, creativity, and flexibility of schools in a school-based management environment, perceptions of the source of constraints on schools were examined. The responses of principals are summarized in Table 6.10.

The teachers' association, community groups, and the Federal government were not perceived by principals as notable sources of constraint. Principals were evenly divided in their perceptions of the Board of Education as a source of constraint, with five offering no opinion. These perceptions contrasted with those of district office personnel, as noted earlier in this chapter, where only relatively minor involvement in implementation was attributed to the Board. Slightly more than half of the principals who offered opinions disagreed that the province was a source of constraint, with four offering no opinion.

TABLE 6.10

Principals' perceptions of sources of constraint

Source	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Board of Education	1 (4.8)	7 (33.3)	5 (23.8)	7 (33.3)	1 (4.8)
Teachers' association	2 (9.5)	10 (47.6)	6 (28.6)	3 (14.3)	-
Community groups	-	13 (61.9)	5 (23.8)	3 (14.3)	-
Province	-	9 (42.9)	4 (19.0)	5 (23.8)	3 (14.3)
Federal Government	6 (28.6)	7 (33.3)	8 (38.1)	-	-

Note. Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

District Office Roles

An important factor emerging from the review of the literature was that the successful implementation of school-based management involved a change in the ecology and styles of leadership of the district office. In the perceptions of the district office staff, such ecological change has occurred in Snowfields School District, both structurally and culturally.

The ceiling placed by the province on administration expenditure, and the move to a school-based management environment, have caused some significant restructuring of the district office organization. The design of school-based management processes in the district included the reorganization of the district office,

> *Every component in the jurisdiction is a site, and the same principles and theory behind site-based management apply to each and every site, whether its transportation or whether it's a school, whether it's maintenance, or whether it's the office of the superintendent. They're obligated to live within their resources just like everyone else in each of the sites.* (Associate Superintendent)

A cultural change in the district office from that of a central authority to that of a support and advisory role has also occurred,

> *I would say in total that there is much greater emphasis on having the buck stop on the principal's desk and not so much at the central office level. We're probably more mediators in the sense of solving problems between, say, parents and the school, whereas in the past, there was probably a greater emphasis on being the authority to solve the problem.* (Associate Superintendent)
>
> *I think that, in general, there is an overall acceptance that that's the way we're going to operate, and everybody's going to try and see if they can make it successful. I know that we've gotten into some discussions over the last year during the implementation on various issues, suggesting the way we would have decided in the past, but it's no longer in our ballpark to be deciding on something that's now the schools'. We're constantly having to remind ourselves that that's a school decision. If they want consultation on it, we're certainly able to provide some consultation to them, but the ultimate decision, we have to keep reminding ourselves, lies with them.* (Associate Superintendent)

In the perceptions of principals, slightly more than half of the principals who offered opinions agreed or strongly agreed that the district office role had changed from one of supervision to one of support. However, two thirds of the principals perceived that district office support was forthcoming for initiatives emanating from the school, and a majority also agreed or strongly agreed that the district office provided information needed by the school for decision making. The district superintendent stated that

> *they [schools] have all the information they need to do these things, always have had, except in the past, it's all been laid on and coordinated in detail from the central office. Now there are no formulas, and none of that coordination exists. They do a lot of decision making at the school level, and then they just advise us as to where they need us in the process.*

However, an associate superintendent held a differing perspective,

> *We have had difficulty in providing significant or substantive amounts of financial information, as we are developing a total financial information program within the central office. There has been some difficulty in providing enough financial reporting to the principals, so that they were not aware of what status their budgets had as quickly as they felt they needed the information.*

In terms of general information, the associate superintendent also noted that

> *the schools complain that we're providing far too much information, and they can't handle it all.*

Only one principal disagreed that principals were able to influence district policies that affected schools, although nine principals did not offer opinions.

Principals observed in respect of such influence that

> *we did previously,*

and that it was

> *no more than before.*

Finding #17. District office personnel perceived that the role of the district office had changed under school-based management, while principals' perceptions of such changes were less conclusive. Principals generally perceived that their initiatives were supported by the district office, and that adequate information was provided to enable schools to make decisions. District office staff perceptions were that the information provided was not adequate. Perceptions of principals of their ability to influence district office decisions were not conclusive.

School Leadership

Changes in leadership styles are not confined to the district office under school-based management, according to the review of the literature. The leadership style of principals is a factor of some significance in the implementation of school-based management and, in turn, is shaped and influenced by the processes. The perceptions of principals of the influence and impact of the phenomenon on leadership in schools are summarized in Table 6.11.

These data indicated that school-based management has had important influences on leadership patterns in the district's schools, even at this comparatively early stage of implementation. All principals agreed or strongly agreed that their leadership roles had become more complex under school-based management, while 19 principals perceived that leadership had become a shared responsibility within the school. Fewer principals agreed or strongly agreed that school-based management had engendered changes in traditional patterns of school decision making, that teacher leadership had been enhanced, and that better quality decisions were being made. However, in the area of changes to personal leadership styles engendered by school-based management, 10 principals agreed or strongly agreed that this had occurred, and nine disagreed or strongly disagreed that it had, with two principals offering no opinion.

One principal perceived potential danger in changes in principal leadership styles, observing that

> *I think there's a danger of a principal becoming more of a manager as opposed to an educational leader, and a manager of a facility as opposed to being a colleague and an educator. There's a temptation that you become a numbers cruncher or a policy maker or a politically oriented person who's trying to get certain groups to agree with directions that you're looking at, as opposed to someone who's communicating about educational matters.*

Finding #18. Principals perceived that school-based management had influenced school leadership in some ways, including, in particular, making the

TABLE 6.11

Principals' perceptions of leadership changes

(*N* = 21)

Source	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Changes in leadership style	2 (9.5)	7 (33.3)	2 (9.5)	9 (42.9)	1 (4.8)
More complex	-	-	-	13 (61.9)	8 (38.1)
Leadership as shared responsibility	-	1 (4.8)	1 (4.8)	13 (61.9)	6 (28.6)
Leadership pattern changes	-	2 (9.5)	6 (28.6)	9 (42.9)	4 (19.0)
Enhanced teacher leadership	-	2 (9.5)	6 (28.6)	11 (52.4)	2 (9.5)
Better quality decisions	-	1 (4.8)	5 (23.8)	12 (57.1)	3 (14.3)

Note. Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

leadership roles of principals more complex, engendering patterns of shared leadership in schools, and the reaching of better quality decisions.

Other Influences

The perceptions of principals were examined about a range of more general influences and impacts which are attributed, in the literature, to the advent of school-based management. Principals responses are summarized in Table 6.12.

Some principals were cautious in attributing influences and impacts to school-based management, for example,

> *Many of the changes in the items had taken place, or started to take place, prior to SBDM, for example, school climate, trust among staff, shared mission, communications, work practices, etc.*
>
> *My responses are neutral since many of these factors were a reality of what was done prior to SBM in the district.*

The data contained in Table 6.12 presented a varied picture of principals' perceptions of general influences and impacts. School-based management would appear to have influenced a heightened sense of shared mission in schools, shared decision making, collaborative work practices, increases in staff and principals' workloads, and time constraints. There has also been some influence on school climate, trust among staff, communications, clearer understanding of roles, shared responsibility for effective discipline, creativity and innovation, staff morale, and loyalty. Aspects of these general perceptions helped inform other perceptions about school-based management, program quality, and student achievement which emerged in the study.

TABLE 6.12

Principals' perceptions of school-based management influences

(*N* = 21)

Area	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Response
Better school climate	-	4 (19.0)	10 (47.6)	6 (28.6)	1 (4.8)	-
Higher levels of trust	-	4 (19.0)	9 (42.9)	6 (28.6)	2 (9.5)	-
Shared mission	-	-	3 (14.3)	16 (76.2)	2 (9.5)	-
Better communications	-	-	9 (42.9)	9 (42.9)	3 (14.3)	-
Shared decision making	-	-	6 (28.6)	11 (52.4)	4 (19.0)	-
Collaborative work practices	-	1 (4.8)	5 (23.8)	13 (61.9)	2 (9.5)	-
Understanding of roles	-	2 (9.5)	9 (42.9)	9 (42.9)	1 (4.8)	-
Effective discipline	-	5 (23.8)	9 (42.9)	5 (23.8)	2 (9.5)	-
Creativity and innovation	-	5 (23.8)	6 (28.6)	6 (28.6)	4 (19.0)	-

TABLE 6.12
(Cont.)

Increased morale	-	5 (23.8)	8 (38.1)	7 (33.3)	1 (4.8)	-
Staff loyalty	-	3 (14.3)	12 (57.1)	5 (23.8)	1 (4.8)	-
Increased staff workloads	-	1 (4.8)	1 (4.8)	14 (66.7)	5 (23.8)	-
Increased principals' workloads	-	-	-	8 (38.1)	13 (61.9)	-
Increased time constraints	-	-	2 (9.5)	8 (38.1)	8 (38.1)	3 (14.3)

Note. Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

Job Satisfaction

Principals' perceptions of relationships between school-based management, changes in leadership patterns, and job satisfaction are presented in Table 6.13.

TABLE 6.13

Principals' perceptions of increased job satisfaction

($N = 21$)

Response	Principals	Teachers	Support Staff
Strongly Disagree	1 (4.8)	-	-
Disagree	4 (19.0)	2 (9.5)	3 (14.3)
Neutral	6 (28.6)	8 (38.1)	10 (47.6)
Agree	7 (33.3)	9 (42.9)	6 (28.6)
Strongly Agree	3 (14.3)	1 (4.8)	1 (4.8)
No Response	-	1 (4.8)	1 (4.8)

Note. Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

While majorities of principals who offered opinions in these areas were generally in agreement that leadership changes have influenced job satisfaction of principals, teachers, and support staff, a number also offered no opinion in each of the modal response categories.

Job satisfaction may be influenced by recent provincial political history, as noted by a principal,

> *In the province, there's been an awful lot of criticisms of educators. Politicians have used educators as scapegoats, they have criticized. I believe that part of the philosophy of some of the leadership in the government was that in order to restructure something, you've got to discredit it first to facilitate restructuring, and teachers bore the brunt of that. To win them back into the fold after that, and get them to trust that they're believed in and cared about has not been an easy task.*

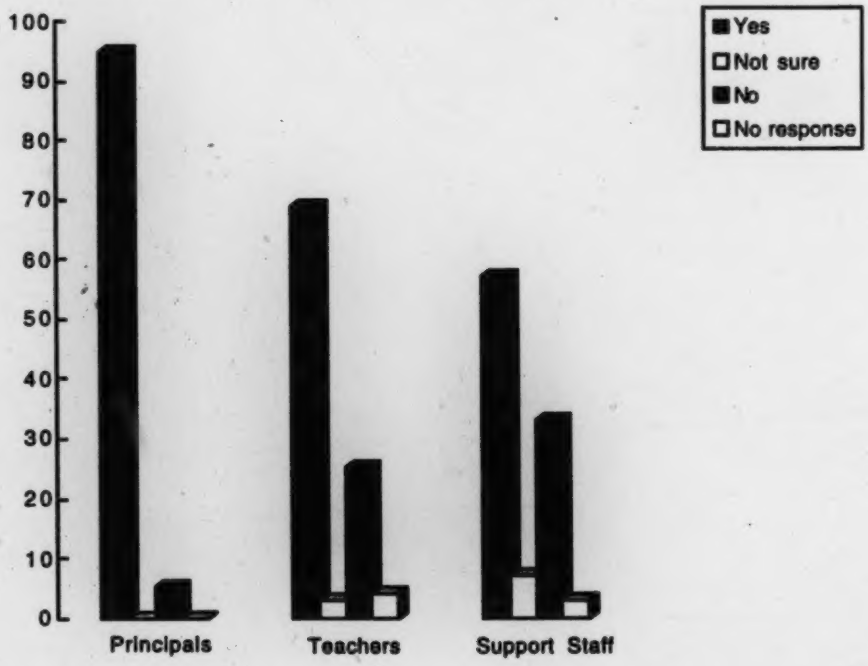
The district's 1995/1996 Annual Education Results Report reported on the satisfaction levels in decision-making processes, including those for principals, teachers, and support staff (see Figure 6.1). These satisfaction levels were perceived as an improvement on the 1994/1995 levels.

The district superintendent perceived job satisfaction as a more relevant goal of school-based management than student achievement,

> *Obviously we want to improve student achievement, but what I am suggesting is that, while that's an ultimate goal of virtually everything that we do, that the more direct outcome [of school-based management] may be a more satisfied workforce, a happier workforce.*

FIGURE 6.1

Satisfaction levels (percentages) with decision-making processes



Accountability

The implementation of school-based management in Snowfields School District occurred in the context of provincial fiscal limitations and broadened processes of accountability imposed by the provincial authority. Principals' perceptions of levels of accountability to the district office and to parents are summarized in Table 6.14.

These data were unequivocal. Principals perceived that under school-based management, accountability to both the district office and to parents had increased.

A principal observed that

> *the level of accountability was a long time coming. Education, I think, did it to themselves for a lot of years by saying, "we can't measure anything, so go way and leave us alone." For me, it's a positive thing. It proves to me we're doing what we're supposed to be doing, and being able to see that you're getting to where you're setting the goal to be.*

TABLE 6.14

Principals' perceptions of heightened accountability

(*N* = 21)

Response	To district office	To parents
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	-	-
Neutral	-	1 (4.8)
Agree	11 (52.4)	10 (47.6)
Strongly Agree	10 (47.6)	9 (42.9)
No Response	-	1 (4.8)

Note. Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

Finding #19. Under school-based management, principals perceived that accountability to parents and the district office had increased.

An Ongoing Process

A clear, though not unanimous, consensus existed in the district that the processes of school-based management implementation were not complete, and that the development of the phenomenon was ongoing,

> *It certainly isn't complete.* (Principal)
>
> *I don't really think that school-based management will ever be completed as long as we always have reasons to discuss and find ways to improve things.* (Principal)
>
> *I think that we're just at the infancy stage, and I think that the implementation is going to be ongoing and continuous, and that it will continue to be refined and become more successful. Once we come to the conclusion that we're at the other end, then we're at a stalemate of progression.* (Associate Superintendent)
>
> *It has to be ongoing. We have probably made a fundamental structural change in the organization, but whether we have effected true change at the site remains to be seen.* (Associate Superintendent)

Finding #20. Principals and district office staff generally perceived that the implementation of school-based management was an ongoing, developmental process.

Patterns of Future Development

If the assumption that school-based management will be an ongoing developmental process in the district is accurate, then perceptions of possible future development patterns are relevant. The beginnings of school restructuring have been examined in this chapter. Further to these beginnings, an associate superintendent voiced the view that

> *if I was to go ahead a couple of years, and turn around and look back, I think that we're going to look at things that we're doing today as being very archaic in the way we manage and process the operation of the organization. I think that it's going to be almost a self-propelling process of good and positive change.*

The associate superintendent also perceived that this type of development will result in administrators evolving who are attuned to such organizational renewal.

Principals' perceptions of future development patterns tended to be more pragmatically focused, with several considering that facilities maintenance and custodial services would be an area for further administrative devolution, although such perceptions were not uniformly welcomed by respondents. One principal saw business partnerships as an area for possible developments,

> *There could be more partnerships with business and more entrepreneurial pursuits by the school than where we are now. I think there's unlimited possibilities, in that sense, for schools, depending on what the central office puts in place as limitations or encouragement of these things.*

Recentralization. All but one of the principals and district office staff interviewed in the study were not in favor of recentralization of the system at any point. The following are examples of principals' perspectives,

> *No, I wouldn't like to revert. Now there is no question. Now we know that we can make decisions that will affect the students in the school. There have been improvements in the immediacy of decisions, and of flexibility.* (Principal)

> *No one person can make a decision universally for the district that will be good for every one of those schools. When the dollars are in your hands, you look at your community, you look at your staff, you look at your kids, and you can make the decision that most meets their needs. So no, not ever!* (Principal)

The one principal who did not have a concern about recentralization was not opposed to school-based management, but, rather, believed that the energies of principals should be directed to what he perceived as the key tasks of the school,

> *The bottom line is relating with kids; working with students about thinking, about skills, playing basketball, writing exams, coordinating complementary course programs, inviting parents into the school. That's what schools are about.*

District office administrators, while opposed to recentralization, perceived that efficiency and effectiveness could be enhanced if some facets of operations were recentralized, for example,

> *I think that sooner or later there will be a realization amongst a significant number of principals that they are dealing with some fairly straight forward things that may have at one point seemed like big issues. They're dealing with them in twenty-one different sites in twenty-one different ways, and they're wasting a lot of time and energy when they could transfer some of those roles back to a central department or authority who could deal with that. It doesn't have to be an authority model.* (Associate Superintendent)

Finding #21. Neither principals nor district office staff perceived that a need or a desire existed in the district at the time of the study to recentralize devolved responsibilities. The flexibility and the ability to react to identified needs were some reasons that principals held such perceptions. Some district office staff perceived that efficiencies could be attained through some recentralization of services without impinging on the authority devolved to schools.

Other Perceptions of Influences and Impacts

Broader perceptions of the influences and impacts of school-based management in Snowfields School District were sought in the study. Responses represented a wide range of perspectives. These included a welcoming of opportunities to plan locally to meet educational needs, including resource management, increased opportunities to offer better quality education programs, and enhanced staff motivation. They also included concerns about the amount of work school-based management entailed, possible increasing insularity of schools from each other, lack of real empowerment of schools by the district office, limits to the autonomy engendered by outside groups, especially government, and inefficiencies rendered by the decentralization of services. The following are examples of the perceptions offered,

> *Implementation personalized our work here at the school. Highly motivational.* (Principal)
>
> *I am not a fully convinced believer. I still have reservations about whether it is in fact the best way to organize the system. I think there is a lot of duplication of management efforts, and I think that much of what we want out of site-based management could have been accomplished through retaining a considerable number of organizational things centrally while giving schools more autonomy to set up school plans and to target student achievement.* (Associate Superintendent)

The data also indicated that there were only slight changes in principals' perceptions of their levels of positiveness towards school-based management after the implementation in comparison to before the implementation, as indicated in Table 6.1 Fifteen principals considered that their perceptions were positive after implementation, and six did not agree or offered no opinion. The turnover in occupancy of principals' perceptions may have affected perceptions summarized by these data.

Summary

The implementation and general impact and influence of school-based management in Snowfields School District have been examined in this chapter. The district orientation to school-based management implementation, provincial influences, aspects of the implementation processes themselves, and principals' and district office staff perceptions of these were considered. An array of areas where school-based management may have had impact and exerted influence, in the perceptions of principals and district office staff, were explored. Perceptions of possible future developments and the possibility of recentralization were briefly examined, and the chapter concluded with an overview of some general perceptions about school-based management held by principals and district office staff.

The analysis conducted in this chapter yielded 18 findings.

Chapter 7 examines the relationship between school-based management and school programs, as perceived by principals and district office personnel.

Summary of Findings

Finding #4. There was some familiarity in the district with the philosophy and practices of school-based management prior to implementation. This was due to the district's existing devolutionary policies and practices, and to some awareness of developments in the Edmonton Public School District.

Finding #5. The anticipated provincial mandate was a very important, but not exclusive, element in the decision to implement school-based management in the district.

Finding #6. A majority of principals were generally positive about school-based management prior to its implementation, although some principals held strong reservations. Reasons underpinning principals' perceptions were diverse, and included motivation and leadership by principals, a welcoming of the opportunity for more local control, autonomy, and creativity, a wariness of the effects of change, and suspicions about the motivation for the introduction of school-based management.

Finding #7. District office staff were generally positive about school-based management prior to implementation, although some reservations were held which were focused largely on the effects of the processes on the standardization of services, and on system cohesiveness.

Finding #8. Principals perceived that they were consulted about the implementation of school-based management, and that they were involved in the preparation of the district's policies and procedures.

Finding #9. While principals and district office staff perceived that training and inservice about school-based management was necessary and provided, only slightly more than half of the principals who offered opinions perceived that such programs were effective, and district office staff did not perceive that the programs were effective. Inexperience in the district with the phenomenon as it was implemented, and the accelerated rate of implementation appeared to be the reasons for the negative perceptions held.

Finding #10. Principals understood the stated goals of school-based management prior to its implementation.

Finding #11. There was clear division in principals' perceptions about school-based management being attuned to their specific school contexts, and most principals did not perceive that the rate of implementation took cognizance of such contexts. The study has indicated that the decision to implement was taken by the district for the district, and that individual schools were not given options about the nature and rate of implementation.

Finding #12. Principals and district office staff generally demonstrated trust about the implementation of school-based management, although there was also evidence of some mistrust and anxiety being present. Indications emerged from the data suggesting that suspicion of political motives at provincial level underpinned some mistrust.

Finding #13. Half of the principals' cohort perceived that there was some significant resistance to the implementation of school-based management from their principal colleagues, but the cohort did not perceive generally that there was significant resistance from elsewhere. Some district office staff perceived that there was resistance from the teachers' association. Possible reasons for principals' perceptions of resistance by other principals were cited in Finding #6.

Finding #14. Although the roles and influences of school councils in the district's school-based management environment were difficult to clearly discern and assess, principals and district office staff perceived that councils do have roles in the processes, but that the nature of such roles was unclear or was still developing, and appeared to be particularly sensitive to the specific nature of each school site.

Finding #15. The perceptions of principals were that, under school-based management, budgetary authority is held at the school, with less authority held in matters of staffing and school programs. Principals' perceptions indicated some uncertainty about curriculum authority among those who offered opinions.

Finding #16. Principals and district office staff perceived that, under school-based management, school autonomy and flexibility, and the ability to take initiatives had increased. However, patterns of responses to this ability were mixed at this stage of the implementation, and perceptions existed of some resistance to this ability.

Finding #17. District office personnel perceived that the role of the district office had changed under school-based management, while principals' perceptions of such changes were less conclusive. Principals generally perceived that their initiatives were supported by the district office, and that adequate information was provided to enable schools to make decisions. District office staff perceptions were that the information provided was not adequate. Perceptions of principals of their ability to influence district office decisions were not conclusive.

Finding #18. Principals perceived that school-based management had influenced school leadership in some ways, including, in particular, making the leadership roles of principals more complex, and engendering patterns of shared leadership in schools, and the reaching of better quality decisions.

Finding #19. Under school-based management, principals perceived that accountability to parents and the district office had increased.

Finding #20. Principals and district office staff generally perceived that the implementation of school-based management was an ongoing, developmental process.

Finding #21. Neither principals nor district office staff perceived that a need or a desire existed in the district at the time of the study to recentralize devolved responsibilities. The flexibility and the ability to react to identified needs were some reasons that principals held such perceptions. Some district office staff perceived that efficiencies could be attained through some recentralization of services without impinging on the authority devolved to schools.

CHAPTER 7

SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT AND SCHOOL PROGRAM QUALITY

Introduction

In this chapter, the examination of the impact and influence of school-based management in schools, which commenced in Chapter 6, is continued with an exploration of impact and influence on the quality of school programs in Snowfields School District. The chapter addresses the question of what perceptions were held by principals and district office staff about relationships between school-based management and school program quality, and why such perceptions were held.

Data Sources

The pattern of synthesizing data sources, established in Chapter 6 in examining the overall effects of the implementation of school-based management, is continued in this and the following chapter's analyses and discussions. Conceptual and analytical structures were based in the survey questionnaire items, which were developed from the contents of the literature. Section D of the questionnaire survey instrument provided the key structures for the explorations detailed in this chapter. The section contained 16 items, with one invitation to respondents to provide open responses to any matters pertaining to the section's focus on program quality. These open responses provided a useful data source in making some of the findings. Interviews also formed a very valuable source of data, especially in seeking to understand the perceptions of principals as those most directly responsible for addressing and implementing school-level policies and practices which influence the caliber of programs in the schools.

As anticipated, documentary sources provided limited amounts of data which contributed to deeper understandings of the areas addressed in the chapter. However, an analysis of School Education Plans did provide useful insights into the goals of schools in their pursuit of quality in school programs.

Influence and Impact on School Programs

Quality of School Programs

As indicated in Table 7.1, 10 of the district's principals perceived that school-based management had contributed to the overall quality of their school's educational programs, although slightly over one third of the principal cohort did not offer an opinion.

TABLE 7.1

Contribution to overall school program quality

(*N* = 21)

Response	*f*	%*f*
Strongly Disagree	1	4.8
Disagree	2	9.5
Neutral	8	38.1
Agree	8	38.1
Strongly Agree	2	9.5

Data from other sources would seem to support the perceptions of principals indicated in the table, which may be characterized as perceptions that school-based management has influenced the quality of school programs, but that such perceptions are tempered with uncertainty, and a degree of ambivalence.

Principals made the following observations which illustrated these perceptions,

> *We have taken several steps/initiatives to enhance our educational program, but these may (probably?) would have taken place even if school-based management had not been in place. However, the perception that school-based management has given us greater autonomy has created an atmosphere that fosters innovation.*

> *Most of the items in this section [of the survey questionnaire] are occurring, but not as a result of SBDM. They are the result of good teaching and strong leadership in fulfilling our professional mandate to provide a quality program.*

> *Some marvelously effective programming options have come out of that [the implementation of school-based management], and some really creative solutions to programs that we could never have done. We wouldn't have even thought of them under the old system because the system didn't even allow you to think that way about things.*

The thrusts of these perceptions were echoed to some extent by district personnel. An associate superintendent, for example, observed that

> *I have seen positive influence. I certainly could point out instances where schools have taken on what they see as being total school approaches to dealing with things like school environment, school climate, to dealing with curriculum, as to how they organize their entire instructional strategies and the teaming that takes place.*

Finding #22. School-based management created opportunities for school program quality to be influenced, and there were examples of this occurring in the school district. The degree of causality between such initiatives and school-based management was difficult to discern, and such causality may be influenced by other developments and activities in the district. Perceptions of enhanced quality appear to be influenced by the flexibility at school level afforded by school-based management.

Quality Indicators

The review of the literature indicated a number of areas where school-based management may have influence and impact and which, collectively and separately, may provide insights into relationships between school-based management and the quality of school programs. The responses of principals to questionnaire survey items that school-based management has influenced each of these areas are summarized in Table 7.2.

TABLE 7.2

Contribution to quality indicators ($N = 21$)

Indicator	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Curriculum flexibility	1 (4.8)	7 (33.3)	6 (28.6)	5 (23.8)	2 (9.5)
Curriculum decision making	1 (4.8)	5 (23.8)	8 (38.1)	5 (23.8)	2 (9.5)
Resource management	-	-	5 (23.8)	13 (61.9)	3 (14.3)
Instructional policy	-	3 (14.3)	4 (19.0)	14 (66.7)	-
Individual differences	-	2 (9.5)	3 (14.3)	12 (57.1)	4 (19.0)
Access to specialized resources	-	5 (23.8)	3 (14.3)	10 (47.6)	3 (14.3)
Instructional programs	-	7 (33.3)	3 (14.3)	10 (47.6)	1 (4.8)
Text and supplemental materials	-	9 (42.9)	9 (42.9)	3 (14.3)	-
Relationships with parents	-	5 (23.8)	7 (33.3)	9 (42.9)	-

Note. Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

The level of uncertainty and ambivalence which surrounded the more general perceptions of relationships between school-based management and the quality of school programs was reflected to some extent in principals' responses to quality indicator

items, in that of the 189 responses, 48 were in the neutral category. Notwithstanding, some findings were made.

Curriculum Flexibility

Eight principals who offered opinions disagreed or strongly disagreed that school-based management had increased curriculum flexibility at the school level, and slightly fewer of those who offered an opinion agreed or strongly agreed that the phenomenon had contributed to the relocation of curriculum decision making from the district office to the school. The data indicated that the provincial influence was one reason for such perceptions being held, for example,

> *Since Alberta Education basically controls our curriculum, we're not able to make changes or much difference there. We can make some changes in programs and the way we offer programs, but the curriculum is pretty laid out, and that's a provincial mandate.* (Principal)

However, one principal had observed some change, noting that

> *before site-based management, teachers depended more on the district office in the area of curriculum leadership. This now comes from the teachers themselves.*

Finding #23. Curriculum flexibility under school-based management was perceived by a majority of the principals who offered an opinion to be restricted by provincial curriculum mandates. This finding is aligned with the perceptions noted in part in Finding #15, indicating uncertainty among principals about the levels of curriculum authority held by them.

Resource Management

Sixteen principals agreed or strongly agreed that school-based management had contributed to better resource management at school level, with no principal disagreeing, and five offering no opinion.

The importance of these perceptions is heightened by the reality that, in an era of fiscal restraint, no additional financial resources had been available to schools or the district office for school-based management implementation, and levels of financial resources allocated to schools and school districts had declined. In the view of an associate superintendent,

> *At the same time we were implementing the site-based management model, we were also experiencing a significant reduction in the resources available. At the same time, we expected that schools were going to be able to provide at least the same, if not more, services at the school level. So in essence they were working with far less dollars than we had available to us when the model was centralized.*

A principal also observed that there are restrictions to the flexibility of resources which are allocated,

> *Site-based management has given us some power over budget, but I think really in the long term, it is a minimal effect over a very small portion of the budget. There is a high portion of the budget that goes to staffing, and a low portion of the budget that goes to supplies, materials, technology, and so on, and there's very small margins there of flexibility.*

Principals' perceptions of better management of resources at the school level were endorsed by district office personnel, for example,

> *There's more liberty given to schools to operate in a way that they think is the best to organize their resources. We emphasize with principals that they have the resources at their disposal, as much as there are in terms of resources, and that if they want to try doing different things, they can do that. The emphasis is on the outcomes.* (Associate Superintendent)

Finding #24. Better resource management has occurred at school level under school-based management.

Access to Specialized Resources

Thirteen of the district's principals perceived that, under school-based management, there was enhanced access to specialized resources, including personnel. Five principals disagreed that this had occurred, and three offered no opinion.

Reductions in the district office support services staff, and increased fiscal flexibility at school level, appeared to have been catalysts for this enhanced access,

> *We used to have a whole cadre of people who were the district's testing people. We didn't have any choice, they were hired by the district and we were to use them. If we didn't use them, we didn't have anyone. Once site-based management came in, they soon got the message from the principals that we wanted to choose with our dollar who we would hire. I can have who I want, consultant, assessments, whatever. Free-market competition gives us the best service for our dollar in terms of hiring outside professional and technical advice.* (Principal)

Finding #25. A majority of principals and district office staff perceived that school-based management had contributed to the ability of schools to gain access to specialized staff and resources because of the financial and operational flexibility afforded schools by school-based management.

Instructional Policy and Individual Differences

Interview data indicated that both principals and district office personnel did perceive that, in a school-based management environment, school-level instructional policy and the ability of schools to respond to individual differences in students had both been enhanced. These perspectives were particularly endorsed by principals, with a number describing in some detail how they had used the flexibility engendered by school-based management to meet particular needs of students in their schools. One principal, for example, commented in respect of special education, that

> *the biggest influence on our school program, the biggest positive influence of site-based management for our school, is in the area of special education, the area of special needs. There's a funding formula there, but that funding goes into the school pot, and that child's programming needs have to be attended to by the school. But there is no dollar-to-kid translation or tie there. The accountability is in the programming. I have to show that we are programming appropriately to meet the child's needs, and whether it's costing me five dollars or five thousand dollars doesn't have to come into it unless I am not programming to meet that child's needs.*

The perceptions of principals as determined by the questionnaire survey are summarized in Table 7.2.

The data confirmed that majorities of principals agreed or strongly agreed that school-based management had contributed to both the development of school-level instructional policies, and the abilities of schools to respond to individual needs in students.

The district superintendent perceived that the sizes and types of schools may have also exercised some influence in these areas,

> Interviewer: *What about the negative influences on school programs?*
>
> Respondent: *I think that in many of the settings there were unique challenges because of either the population or the size of the school. Some of our small schools have seen a significant reduction in the staffing allocations that they had, and even in our larger schools we have certainly seen some changes in that respect. But particularly the smaller schools have seen a reduction in staffing, and that, I believe, has had an impact on the kinds of things they were able to do, and the kinds of services they were able to provide. One example of this is in the area of special education support. They don't have the people any more to do some of the more small group, one-on-one kinds of things that they were able to do in the past.*

Finding #26. School-based management influenced, in the perceptions of principals and district office staff, the abilities of schools to develop instructional policy, and meet individual student differences, although school size, type, and location may have affected that ability. The flexibility afforded schools by school-based management policies appeared to be a major contributor to these perceptions.

Instructional Programs

In contrast, slightly fewer principals agreed or strongly agreed that school-based management had contributed to the development of new instructional programs in their schools.

The reasons for these perceptions and patterns of development of instructional programs were difficult to discern from the data. It may well be that it was too early in the implementation period for initiatives in this area to have come to the fore. Notwithstanding, principals have made observations about possibilities in this area, for example,

> *A lot of schools are concentrating on technology, and they're channeling freedom of decision-making into increased technology in schools. That's an example of an area where the school knows what its capabilities are, and where the improvements are needed, and the schools can now move forward on their own a little more.*

The district superintendent perceived signs of the development of school-level instructional programs, commenting that

> *for example, over at [school], they implemented an early-morning program and an after-school program, the so-called latchkey programs, because they thought it might be a way of attracting kids to the school. Another school has generated an early intervention program, seeking out some of those kids in their earlier years, to get them ready in terms of their reading and those kinds of things on the premise that the families that they're coming from have a very low socioeconomic background, so it's like a Head Start type of program.*

An associate superintendent perceived that provincial assessment programs have influenced the development of instructional program initiatives by schools, and that such influence was not necessarily positive,

> *The other factor has been the provincial achievement tests. They, as a particular measure of student outcomes, have been profound in the impact they've had on our schools, and there is a very strong, and sometimes I don't think positive, motivation to find the best ways of doing things in terms of providing learning opportunities for kids.*

Another associate superintendent perceived this in a more positive way,

> *I think that the move to site-based management, combined with some of the outcomes-based expectations of schools, have had an extremely positive impact in the sense that they have caused schools to consciously focus on what they are doing, and how they are doing it.*

Finding #27. Schools were beginning to use the flexibility associated with school-based management to develop instructional programs at school level. The provincial assessment programs may have inhibited initiatives in this area.

Text and Instructional Materials

Nine principals disagreed that school-based management had contributed to the selection of better text and supplemental instructional material, although an equal number did not offer an opinion. The study did not discern if these perceptions were due to levels of satisfaction with existing materials, or whether this area had not been broached by schools in the implementation of school-based management.

Relationships with Parents

It has been demonstrated in the study that district school-based management policies assumed that the development of specific school policies and identities at each site included the involvement of parents, at least through the formal mechanisms of site councils. Aspects of the nature of relationships between school-based management processes in the district and school councils were examined in Chapter 6. While nine principals agreed that school-based management had contributed to closer relationships with parents, five disagreed, and seven offered no opinion. These perceptions, including some levels of uncertainty and ambivalence, reflected the relevant perceptions examined in Chapter 6.

These perceptions were also reflected in interview data, for example,

> *Parents wanted involvement in what they called budgeting, and parents wanted an involvement in goal setting. However, I found that parents tended to come from their own agenda, and so if they had a special needs child, they didn't care what happened to the rest of the school as long as maximum dollars were spent on special needs. It was getting that global awareness as opposed to "mine," and making them feel that the input they had given actually counted in the decision, even if it wasn't one hundred percent the way they wanted it to be.* (Principal)

> *While we are promoting that [parent participation], and while we encourage it, and while we ask principals when they present their Plans to us so that we can monitor that development, "have parents been involved?," they all say "yes." But when you unpack that comment, you'll find that it's all over the map.* (Superintendent)

Finding #28. While a majority of principals offering an opinion, and some district office staff, perceived that school-based management had contributed to closer relationships with parents at the school level, to the benefit of the quality of school programs, the nature of such relationships across the district was unclear.

Planning

In Chapter 5, the linkages between provincial Business Plans, district Education Plans, and School Education Plans were examined. It was noted that a key linkage was a clear focus on the enhancement of student achievement. This section of the chapter examines school level planning, and its relationship with school program quality.

School Planning

Nearly two thirds of the district's principals agreed or strongly agreed that school-based management had contributed to enhanced collaborative, collegial planning in their schools (see Table 7.3). These data supported those noted in Table 6.12 in respect of shared mission, shared decision making, and collaborative work practices.

TABLE 7.3

Contribution to collaborative, collegial planning

(*N* = 21)

Response	*f*	%*f*
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	3	14.3
Neutral	5	23.8
Agree	12	57.1
Strongly Agree	1	4.8

Goal-setting Procedures

Data also emerged in the study which indicated that collaborative, collegial planning processes were used by schools to establish goals in their Education Plans, and which supported the data noted in Table 6.12, for example,

> *We have a needy community, and so basically we had to look at and focus on how we can best serve our students. We [the staff] looked at program needs, at student needs--what do we need to improve on? Have we completed that goal? Do we need to make more growth there? Do we drop that one and add something else? We look at our student progress on the achievement tests as another way of setting goals.* (Principal)

Finding #29. School-based management has contributed to school-level collaborative, collegial planning in the district, including in the goal setting processes of School Education Plans.

Goal Alignment

The data also indicated that cognition of, and alignment with, district and provincial goals, were a considered part of school level program planning, for example,

> *We are aware of what the district goals are, and obviously there is a wish to at least align ourselves or address in some measures those larger goals of the district. I think it would be impossible not to because the areas that one wants to address remain constant in terms of development of children, of achievement, of conduct, and so on. So you're never going to be outside the things that the district also wants to see happen.* (Principal)

Finding #30. Goal setting at the school level took cognizance of district and provincial goals.

School and Community Goals

Finding #14 indicated that community input through the formal mechanisms of school councils was present, but that the pattern of influence and impact was unclear. Similarly, determining alignments between goals desired or perceived as important by communities and those established by schools was difficult, although there was no evidence of misalignment of such goals. A principal described goal setting processes which allowed for school community input,

> *We collect data primarily from parent surveys and staff input. We then organize, categorize, and prioritize all that information into school goals for the next year. For the most part, the school's goals are, for example, school spirit, increased communication, increased discipline, those kinds of things, that don't necessarily have a budget line to them.*

Another observed that

> *there was a high degree of similarity between what the staff wanted and what the community wants.*

Such descriptions were common responses in the study. The district superintendent, however, cautioned that community contribution to school goals is not uniform,

> *If you go from school A, they might be very successful. They might have thirty or forty or fifty people out to look at the Education Plan for the next year. The next school, if they can get out three or four parents, they're quite happy because maybe that's [the Education Plan] not deemed to be important to the parent group.*

A principal also expressed concern that

> *parents are demanding much more as they pursue ownership of teachers and resources, wanting it all for their child.* (Respondent's emphasis)

Finding #31. While the study did not specifically address the degree of alignment between school and community goals, principals and district office staff perceived that there were efforts to involve school communities in goal setting. There was no evidence of misalignment between school and community goals.

Budgets and Goals

An associate superintendent noted in a district information paper on funding distribution models in school-based management environments, that "the basic foundation in site-based decision making is the development of an equitable funding distribution of the school system's resources. There are no predetermined amounts or categories that are universally acceptable." Perceptions were sought in the study about linkages between budget planning and program goals setting, in particular, the influence of school budgets on the establishment of school goals. Perceptions were quite diverse, for example,

> *I wouldn't say the budget dictates the goals. The budget certainly influences how well you can carry out your goals. You might not be able to achieve them as much as you want because you don't have the support. We have children who come to school who are not ready to learn, and we need to provide a lot of assistance. With the loss of our learning assistance program, we had to find other ways to do that. You find other ways to bring resources, whether they're people or monetary resources, into the school.* (Principal)

However, the focus on budgeting in school-based management processes was perceived to present some challenges, for example,

> *If you don't watch out, the budget becomes your site-based decision making. You must indicate goals that are reachable and practical, and for some schools, some goals areas are simply not practical. So you tend to channel your efforts and ambitions and goals into things that you can reach, and that may curtail many avenues for certain schools, for example, in the area of technology. The tricky thing with goals is that you tend to center on things you can afford and are measurable, and that leaves a lot of ground untouched, and that's unfortunate. It sometimes makes education too neat a package, and you miss a lot of the real good things.* (Principal)

Finding #32. A perception existed among principals of a relationship between budgets and school program goal setting. Although the possibility of school budgets dictating goals was also perceived by some principals, no evidence of this occurring emerged in the study.

Teacher Participation

The ambivalence and lack of overall clarity of the roles and influence of parents in goal setting in schools across the district also appeared to be similarly attached to the roles of teachers, in the perceptions of principals and district office staff. A principal observed that

> *I think to involve the staff at the level where it [the decision] has the highest impact is a good issue, but it's not a panacea to answer all issues. The bottom line is, teachers want to teach. They want their classrooms, they want to teach.*

Teacher resistance to goal setting procedures was perceived as a problem by a principal,

> *Probably the biggest drawback that I'm finding is convincing staff they need to be involved in all parts of it [school-based management]. I have a very strong feeling that all staff need to be involved in all parts of it, and my staff don't quite think the same. Budgeting is not a problem, I can get them involved very easily there. But in the goal setting, mission, vision, that kind of thing, not all of them want to be involved.*

Another perceived that the provincial political climate inhibited teacher participation in goal setting,

> *Part of the difficulty, part of the challenge, is to invite all of the staff onto the team, and help them believe that they have a personal opportunity to be involved in whatever directions we go, whatever decisions we make. It's a tough one in the environment that we have for teachers in this province, and even in this system.*

Other forms of resistance were noted by a principal, as well as some changes in attitudes by teachers,

> *There's always that sort of delicate area that some staff don't want to get involved in, they don't want to deal with those sorts of things: "That's your job, that's your responsibility. Give me a classroom, give me 30 kids and let me teach." We have teachers who are beginning to realize that some of those decisions are having an impact on them in the classroom, and so they want to have more say.*

The district superintendent's perceptions of school staff involvement in goal setting resembled his perceptions of parent involvement,

> *It's all over the map.*

He elaborated that

> *one of the things that we ask for them [principals] to do is to make sure that when they're putting their Education Plans together annually, that those plans are done jointly with staff. The reality is that they're successful at doing that at various levels. We ask, "have staff been involved?," and they all say "yes." But if you go to the staff, you'll find maybe a different set of responses: "Well, yes, sort of, but basically they gave us the Plan and we just said yes." And others will say, "yes, we had all sorts of subcommittees which generated the Plan."*

Finding #33. Principals and district office staff perceived that teachers were contributing to goal setting at school level, but the pattern and influence of such contributions in schools across the district were unclear. A perception existed that school staff may not wish to be involved in many facets of school-based management.

School Education Plans

School Education Plans, as an integral component of school-based management processes in the district, represented the key planning outcomes in respect of school goals and program planning. An examination of the executive summaries of School Education Plans for all schools in the district was undertaken. While reflecting the site-specific nature of each school's operations, problems, and resources, each plan also reflected a direct and clear focus, as a very high priority in each case, on the enhancement of the quality of school programs and student achievement. The following examples are illustrative of this focus,

> *Goal #2: One hundred percent of all students will demonstrate acceptable standards in problem-solving skills in mathematics.*
>
> *Goal 1: To improve student achievement in the core subjects:*
>
> *A: To improve students' reading levels.*
> *B: To improve students' understandings of mathematics.*
> *C: To improve students' achievement in social studies.*
> *D: To improve students' achievements in science.*
>
> *To promote growth in academic achievement with an emphasis on language arts and mathematics.*
>
> *1. Improve Student Performance--by improving student achievement on provincial achievement exams, better identifying students with special needs, and utilizing new teaching strategies and technologies. There will also be a*

focus on students mastering basic spelling and improving student reading and writing strategies.

Finding #34. School Education Plans, as an integral component of school-based management planning processes, and as a linkage to district and provincial policies and goals, reflected a strong emphasis on planning for both enhanced school program quality and enhanced student achievement.

Accountability

Accountability for Program Quality

It has been shown in the study that perceptions existed among principals that school-based management had heightened accountability to both the district office and to parents. Sixteen principals also perceived that accountability to the district office for the quality of school programs had also increased (see Table 7.4).

Performance Indicators

Similarly, a majority of principals perceived that school-based management had led to schools developing their own performance indicators of the quality of the school's programs (see Table 7.4).

Finding #35. A majority of principals perceived that, under school-based management, accountability for the quality of school programs had increased, and had led to the development of program quality performance indicators at school level.

TABLE 7.4

Principals' perceptions of accountability and program quality performance indicators (N = 21)

Response	Accountability	Performance Indicators
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	2 (9.5)	3 (14.3)
Neutral	3 (14.3)	3 (14.3)
Agree	8 (38.1)	12 (57.1)
Strongly Agree	8 (38.1)	3 (14.3)

Note. Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

Professional Development

The questionnaire survey data indicated clearly that school-based management had led to the enhancement of professional development programs in schools, in the perceptions of a majority of the district's principals (see Table 7.5).

One principal commented that

> *a huge portion of the budget went towards professional development.*

An associate superintendent observed that

> *in our system, we have organized our school calendar to allocate a minimum of five days with the calendar that are established as in-school professional development days. Many of the schools utilize that time, or a portion of that time, for either the design or review of their Education Plans, and the involvement of staff in discussions relative to that. They can also organize their time so that they can utilize evenings or weekends in association with those days to involve parents.*

Finding #36. In the perceptions of a majority of principals and district office staff, school-based management has facilitated and led to enhanced professional development programs in schools. Increased flexibility in resource usage at school level, and system facilitation of professional development, appeared to be contributing factors for these perceptions.

TABLE 7.5

School-based management and enhanced professional development

($N = 21$)

Response	f	%f
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	3	14.3
Neutral	4	19.0
Agree	12	57.1
Strongly Agree	2	9.5

Effects of Commitments

The literature review demonstrated that the relocation of decision-making authority to schools had implications in terms of increased demands on the school's resources such as time, and the possibility of conflicts arising because of the competing demands of the school's pedagogical and increased managerial responsibilities. Sixteen of the district's principals agreed or strongly agreed that school-based management had created difficulties because of the ongoing demands of teaching and the increased and often competing demands of other commitments, with two principals disagreeing and three offering no opinion. The specific nature of the difficulties created were not determined in the study. However, the following provide some examples,

> *I find myself, if I am not careful, getting involved in policies, meetings, and discussions, and maybe trying to manipulate things a certain way, as opposed to just interacting in a free and open way with people in more of an educational format, whether its a curricular or extracurricular format.* (Principal)

> *There is a feeling, I think, among senior administrators that, in the long term across the province, there will be a significant changeover in the people who are currently in principalship roles. Most of us do not take training in financial management, and I think that the sad part of site-based management in some respects is that people who are very capable of being strong instructional leaders, who are master teachers, very capable of helping others become very strong, proficient curriculum people and teachers, will not serve in the role [of principal] because they are not the day-to-day, nuts-and-bolts managers.* (Associate Superintendent)

Time. Data which emerged from the study indicated that time constraints were a problem created by school-based management, in the perceptions of some principals (see Table 6.12) and district office staff. Increased demands on available time, and the spending of time on managerial rather than educational matters were facets of this problem, for example,

> *The only real obstacle I faced was time. I had to become very, very involved with my personal time.* (Principal)

> *I do not believe that it is constructive in terms of use of time, energy, or anything else, that principals or teachers be involved in a discussion of busing, or facilities issues.* (Superintendent)

> *Time, only the time limit, only the time we have put into the Education Plans.* (Principal)

Finding #37. School-based management has created difficulties for schools because of the duality and demands of pedagogical and managerial roles, with principals and district office staff perceiving that time constraints posed particular difficulties. The relocation of managerial authority to schools was perceived as a prime source of these difficulties.

Summary

In this chapter, perceptions held by principals and district office staff in Snowfields School District about relationships between school-based management, as implemented in the district, and the quality of school programs, have been examined. Perceptions of the impact and influence of school-based management on the overall quality of school programs were explored, and an examination of a series of quality indicators which the literature suggested were key indicators of program quality was undertaken. Perceptions of school program planning processes were considered, including the goal setting procedures used in establishing and developing School Education Plans, as were the alignments between school, district, and provincial goals, between school and community goals, between goals setting and budgeting, and teacher participation in program goal-setting processes. Perceptions of levels of accountability for the quality of school programs, and the development of program quality performance indicators were briefly considered. The chapter concluded with a perusal of perceptions of some effects created in schools by commitments engendered through school-based management processes, and which may be influencing aspects of school programs.

The analysis undertaken in the chapter yielded 16 findings.

In Chapter 8, perceptions held by principals and district office staff about the relationships between school-based management and student achievement will be similarly examined.

Summary of Findings

Finding #22. School-based management created opportunities for school program quality to be influenced, and there were examples of this occurring in the school district. The degree of causality between such initiatives and school-based management was difficult to discern, and such causality may be influenced by other developments and activities in the district. Perceptions of enhanced quality appear to be influenced by the flexibility at school level afforded by school-based management.

Finding #23. Curriculum flexibility under school-based management was perceived by a majority of the principals who offered an opinion to be restricted by provincial curriculum mandates. This finding is aligned with the perceptions noted, in part, in Finding #15, indicating uncertainty among principals about the levels of curriculum authority held by them.

Finding #24. Better resource management has occurred at school level under school-based management.

Finding #25. A majority of principals and district office staff perceived that school-based management had contributed to the ability of schools to gain access to specialized staff and resources because of the financial and operational flexibility afforded schools by school-based management.

Finding #26. School-based management influenced, in the perceptions of principals and district office staff, the abilities of schools to develop instructional policy, and meet individual student differences, although school size, type, and location may have affected that ability. The flexibility afforded schools by school-based management policies appeared to be a major contributor to these perceptions.

Finding #27. Schools were beginning to use the flexibility associated with school-based management to develop instructional programs at school level. The provincial assessment programs may have inhibited initiatives in this area.

Finding #28. While a majority of principals offering an opinion, and some district office staff, perceived that school-based management had contributed to closer relationships with parents at the school level, to the benefit of the quality of school programs, the nature of such relationships across the district was unclear.

Finding #29. School-based management has contributed to school-level collaborative, collegial planning in the district, including in the goal setting processes of School Education Plans.

Finding #30. Goal setting at the school level took cognizance of district and provincial goals.

Finding #31. While the study did not specifically address the degree of alignment between school and community goals, principals and district office staff perceived that there were efforts to involve school communities in goal setting. There was no evidence of misalignment between school and community goals.

Finding #32. A perception existed among principals of a relationship between budgets and school program goal setting. Although the possibility of school budgets dictating goals was also perceived by some principals, no evidence of this occurring emerged in the study.

Finding #33. Principals and district office staff perceived that teachers were contributing to goal setting at school level, but the pattern and influence of such contributions in schools across the district were unclear. A perception existed that school staff may not wish to be involved in many facets of school-based management.

Finding #34. School Education Plans, as an integral component of school-based management planning processes, and as a linkage to district and provincial policies and goals, reflected a strong emphasis on planning for both enhanced school program quality and enhanced student achievement.

Finding #35. A majority of principals perceived that, under school-based management, accountability for the quality of school programs had increased, and had led to the development of program quality performance indicators at school level.

Finding #36. In the perceptions of a majority of principals and district office staff, school-based management has facilitated and led to enhanced professional development programs in schools. Increased flexibility in resource usage at school level, and system facilitation of professional development, appeared to be contributing factors for these perceptions.

Finding #37. School-based management has created difficulties for schools because of the duality and demands of pedagogical and managerial roles, with principals and district office staff perceiving that time constraints posed particular difficulties. The relocation of managerial authority to schools was perceived as a prime source of these difficulties.

CHAPTER 8

SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Introduction

This chapter addresses the study's specific research question of what perceptions were held by principals and district office staff about the relationships between school-based management and student achievement, and why such perceptions were held.

Data Sources

The patterns of data sources and their usage established in the preceding two chapters, were continued in the analysis and discussion in this chapter. Questionnaire survey items provided the structural basis for the conceptual and analytical framework, with Section E of the instrument forming the main source for the framework of this chapter. The section contained 18 items and one invitation to respondents to make open responses on any matter pertaining to the section's focus on student achievement. Again, these responses provided a useful data source in making some of the findings. Interview data also formed a valuable and potent source about the nature of and some of the reasons for perceptions held about this important facet of school operations in a school-based management environment. The chapter's focus on student achievement meant that principals' perceptions formed a larger data source generally than the perceptions of district office staff, as the former hold direct responsibility for levels of student achievement. Documentary sources provided negligible amounts of data relevant to the chapter, except in the case of the examination of non-measurable achievement. Although considerable amounts of data were available about levels of student achievement in the district, especially in the form of outcomes of provincial assessment programs, there are no structures or mechanisms which clearly link that achievement data with school-based management procedures.

Impact and Influence on Student Achievement

Contributions to Student Academic Growth

The responses of principals were sought about the statement that "school-based management has contributed to the overall academic growth of students." Principals' perceptions are summarized in Table 8.1.

TABLE 8.1

Contribution to students' academic growth

(*N* = 21)

Response	*f*	%*f*
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	6	28.6
Neutral	13	61.9
Agree	2	9.5
Strongly Agree	-	-

All but two of the district's principals either did not perceive or did not offer an opinion about a relationship between school-based management and student academic growth. These perceptions stood in some contrast to principals' perceptions of relationships between school-based management and the quality of school programs (see Table 7.1).

Seeking to understand the reasons for such responses uncovered a number of underlying perceptions about the relationship. In the perceptions of several principals, the item was asking them to make judgements prematurely about the efficacy of school-based management in this area, for example,

> *Too soon to tell.*
>
> *It's very early in the process to answer these questions. We're really only one and a half years into the process. It takes three to five years of a change to be able to effectively measure results such as student achievement under school-based decision making.*

There is little doubt that the perceptions of some principals were influenced by the comparatively early stage of school-based management implementation in the district. However, this understanding must be tempered to some extent, by perceptions in the district, noted earlier, that the district had permitted and encouraged school-level decision making, and had devolved substantial resources to schools in the decade or so prior to the formal implementation of school-based management. In the perceptions of a principal,

> *I think this district's always been fairly flexible, so the change hasn't been enormous. It really hasn't.*

This perception was endorsed by an associate superintendent,

> *This has always been a system that has given a fair amount of authority to schools to create a kind of environment that they felt was important for student learning.*

The Edmonton effect. The influence in Snowfields School District of the initiatives taken over many years by the Edmonton Public School District has been discussed. However, the influence did not appear to have extended to a perception that the initiatives have influenced levels of student achievement in that district. When asked about the possible disparity between the Snowfields School District's belief statements about the influence of school-based management on student achievement, and the possible reality, a principal responded that

> *we knew that before we got into it. We knew that in the Edmonton Public District. The [Edmonton Public School District] superintendent told us in an*

> *inservice before we started that site-based management had not increased student achievement. We knew that.*

The reality that school-based management was but one element of change at work in the district was another reason contributing to the perceptions about school-based management and overall student academic growth, a point made quite strongly by several principals. The following typified such responses,

> *Our school community had already embarked on new directions and innovations* *before* *SBM came into effect. Therefore, many of the trends cited in the survey may be happening here* *but* *they are not attributed to SBM. SBM has given school communities more autonomy in some areas (staffing, budgeting, planning) but these are managerial rather than "educational." The premise that SBM will lead to improved educational service and therefore student achievement/client satisfaction has yet to be borne out.* (Respondent's emphases)

Perhaps the most compelling reason for the perception of little contribution by school-based management to the overall academic growth of students to emerge from the data was that many principals and district office staff did not perceive that there was a significant, direct, or causal relationship between the implementation of school-based management and levels of student achievement, at least in the short term. Data to this effect were extant in the study, for example,

> *I know that the lines to student achievement are pretty light to nonexistent. But I still believe that, by and large, if you involve people in the decision making, they will be happier with the nature of the decisions made; they will better understand them. So it may be that one of the key benefits from site-based decision making has nothing to do with student achievement. The benefit of it has to do with a healthier, more satisfied workforce, and that may be the outcome that is being achieved by site-based decision making. The rest of it, the extension to better student achievement, simply may be a throwaway that's not the reason for site-based decision making.* (Superintendent)

An associate superintendent also observed that

> *I think that the province would have difficulty five years down the road, after the majority of systems have moved into site-based management models, saying "that's the primary factor behind the increase in student achievement." There are so many factors that enter into it, I would have difficulty seeing how that could be considered a primary one.*

Other perceptions offered by principals included the following,

> *It could just be the 90s whim of how to manage schools, and we'll get to the next decade and we'll have another set of templates to follow and so on. I don't*

> *think that these kinds of things which are actually defining the processes of how we arrive at our goals necessarily need to be dictated to schools. If anything, we need to be dictated what our results are expected to be, and let the professionals in the schools determine the processes. Site-based decision making, to some degree, is more focused on the process rather than the product.*
>
> Interviewer: *Have you been able to detect any influence on student achievement in your school by school-based management?*
>
> Respondent: *I don't think so. I think that if there is an influence--and it hasn't significantly occurred to date--it will be a kind of left-handed or a secondary influence. It will come out of our growing opportunity and capacity to plot our own direction, plan our own strategies, and to do things that have come with site-based management. We'll extend that into our student achievement areas, and we'll do a better job because of it. And if we do a better job, our kids will do a better job. So I think we'll see some, but it won't be so direct that you can identify that "site-based management did this, and therefore students did that." It's not going to be quite that clean.* (Principal)

As shown in Table 8.1, perceptions were not uniform. One principal observed

that

> *school-based management facilitates the work that is done relative to programs and achievement.*

Another commented about relationships between school-based management processes and student achievement that

> *if it changes student achievement because we are forced, through the Education Plan, to be more specific, more focused, and therefore we analyze more what's happening, and see where there's a need for doing something differently, and so on, then yes. But that part isn't because of the money or the power being here. It's because the analyzing of the programming has to happen as part of site-based management. That reinforces that we have to be much more analytical about our results and our achievement.*

Finding #38. There was little evidence that principals and district office staff perceived that there were causal linkages between the implementation of school-based management and student achievement. An array of reasons underpinned these perceptions, including the relatively short period of time since the implementation in the district, the reality that school-based management was but one change influence in the district, and because school-based management was not generally perceived as a major influence in the enhancement of student achievement levels. The significance of the last perception is heightened when considered in the light of Finding #10, that a majority of principals understood the goals of school-based management, with the enhancement of student achievement as a prime goal.

Teaching and Learning Processes

While seven principals agreed that school-based management did enhance teaching and learning processes, with four disagreeing, and 10 offered no opinion (see Table 8.2), these perceptions stand in contrast to those indicated in Table 8.1, where only two principals agreed that school-based management was contributing to the academic growth of students.

TABLE 8.2

School-based management enhanced teaching and learning processes

(*N* = 21)

Response	*f*	%*f*
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	4	19.0
Neutral	10	47.6
Agree	7	33.3
Strongly Agree	-	-

Eliciting reasons for these perceptions provided little illumination on the contrast. Again, some principals perceived that it was possibly at too early a stage in the implementation processes to make such judgements. Other principals perceived some discontinuity between the management and organizational thrusts of school-based management and the possibilities for enhancing teaching and learning engendered by the phenomenon. An example of the responses by principals is,

> *We could have (and should have) been responsible for shared mission, goals, objectives, measurements, etc. before school-based management. We still had responsibility in those areas. The control over budget allocations allows some staffing flexibility, and mainly affects our ability to creatively and effectively program for meeting special needs. Only in that area do I see a connection between school-based management and student outcomes.*

This sense of discontinuity was also observed by district office personnel, for example,

> *I think they [principals] had serious reservations about moving in that direction because they were concerned that they would become very much involved with more of the business and accounting side of management than they were in terms of being able to be instructional leaders. I think that's still critical in the role that they're serving.* (Associate Superintendent)

Finding #39. While a majority of principals who offered opinions perceived that school-based management was enhancing teaching and learning processes, there were indications in the data that perceptions existed that such causal linkages were tenuous.

Teaching and Learning Roles

The study examined principals' perceptions of changes in various facets of the teaching and learning roles of schools which may be attributed to the influence of school-based management. The review of the literature suggested the specific areas which were examined. Principals' responses are summarized in Table 8.3.

The perceptions represented by these data reflected, to some extent, the dichotomy in perspectives between principals' perceptions of the influence of school-based management on the overall academic growth of students, and their perceptions of the phenomenon's influence on teaching and learning processes. Some principals again observed that it may be too early in the implementation processes to make meaningful judgements. However, it was possible to make some findings in particular areas.

Basic Skills Acquisition

Eight of the principals who offered opinions agreed or strongly agreed that

TABLE 8.3

School-based management influence on teaching and learning roles

(*N* = 21)

Area	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Basic skills acquisition	1 (4.8)	5 (23.8)	7 (33.3)	6 (28.6)	2 (9.5)
Teacher responsibility for instructional and classroom management	1 (4.8)	4 (19.0)	6 (28.6)	9 (42.9)	1 (4.8)
Teacher responsibility for student performance	1 (4.8)	3 (14.3)	3 (14.3)	12 (57.1)	2 (9.5)
Parent responsibility for student performance	1 (4.8)	7 (33.3)	9 (42.9)	4 (19.0)	-
Expectations of student achievement	1 (4.8)	3 (14.3)	2 (9.5)	11 (52.4)	4 (19.0)
Teacher instructional leadership	1 (4.8)	6 (28.6)	5 (23.8)	9 (42.9)	-

TABLE 8.3
(Cont.)

Meeting special needs	-	4 (19.0)	6 (28.6)	6 (28.6)	5 (23.8)
Diversion of teacher time	1 (4.8)	3 (14.3)	5 (23.8)	10 (47.6)	2 (9.5)

Note. Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

school-based management had caused an increased focus on the acquisition of basic skills, with one third of the cohort offering no opinion. Reasons for this diversity in perceptions were not readily apparent in the study, although there was some reluctance by some principals and district office staff to attribute any such changes to school-based management, for example,

> *I suppose I have to say there is the potential for it to have impact. But it shouldn't have. We should be able to do the things to make student achievement happen and increase and improve. We should be able to do those things anyway.* (Principal)
>
> *You're talking to a person who firmly believes that site-based decision making isn't going to have a major impact on student outcomes.* (Superintendent)

Finding #40. A majority of principals who offered opinions perceived that school-based management had caused an increased focus on the acquisition of basic skills. However, the study did elicit some reluctance by both principals and district office staff to attribute the increase to school-based management.

Levels of Teacher Responsibilities

Slightly more principals who offered opinions perceived that school-based management had contributed to increased levels of teacher responsibility for instructional and classroom management, and for levels of student performance. Again, there was some reluctance by some principals to attribute change to school-based management. In this respect, a principal observed that

> *it's [school-based management] a management style that facilitates the stuff we do. If there is an improvement in student achievement, you may be able to make that loose connection back to site-based management, because it simply facilitated it.*

Another also commented that

> *our student achievement levels are coming up, and that's something we started working on prior to school-based management. We [the staff] value student programs, and so probably we spend as much money as we can on resources, whether it's people or books for kids, rather than on the building.*

Finding #41. While a majority of principals who offered opinions perceived that school-based management had contributed to increasing levels of teacher responsibility for instructional and classroom management decisions, and for student performance, there existed some reluctance among the principal cohort members to attribute these changes specifically to school-based management.

Parent Responsibilities

A majority of the district's principals who offered opinions disagreed or strongly disagreed that school-based management contributed to increased levels of parent responsibility for student performance, although nine did not offer an opinion. These perceptions contrasted to some extent with the findings made and stated in Finding #28, that school-based management was engendering closer relationships with parents. It could be surmised that perceptions of parent roles in the goal-setting and policy-setting processes at school level are perceived to be different from parent roles in the school's teaching and learning roles, although the study did not specifically seek or find evidence to that effect.

Expectations of Student Achievement

Over two thirds of the district's principals perceived that school-based management had caused heightened expectations of student achievement. These perceptions contrasted with principals' perceptions of the contribution of school-based management to the overall academic growth of students. Principals' awareness of the underpinning beliefs associated with school-based management were examined, and there can be little doubt that this awareness contributed to principals' perceptions of heightened expectations of student performance. Principals noted that

> *there is certainly a sense among school staff that with school-based management has come greater accountability.*
>
> *What school-based management has done, it has put a focus on improvement and performance, a real focus.*
>
> In the view of an associate superintendent,
>
> *It [school-based management] has meant that schools have been told that they can organize their resources, and we will look at the results of what happens. So there is a significant emphasis on achievement test results. And so long as they stay at a relatively satisfactory level in comparison to provincial*

> *performance, I think there will be less concern about how the school is organizing.*

The district superintendent perceived heightened expectations of student achievement in a broader sense,

> *It's almost motherhood in the sense that everything that we do should be geared to an increase or an enhancement of student achievement. So it's a given that site-based decision making would also be done for that reason primarily.*

Finding #42. There was a perception among many principals and district staff that school-based management entailed heightened expectations of student achievement. This perception appeared to evolve from the stated underpinning philosophical basis for school-based management.

Teacher Instructional Leadership

A majority of principals who offered opinions perceived that school-based management had led to enhanced instructional leadership by teachers, with five principals not offering an opinion. Data obtained in the study did not indicate reasons for this perception. It has been noted previously that the reduction in support services available from the district office had resulted in teachers assuming some curriculum leadership roles in schools. A principal presented a somewhat pessimistic perspective,

> *Time and expertise needed in areas of performance, measuring, collaboration, curriculum, planning, and professional development as we move ahead. We have "managed" so far by stretching the resources, but are "maxed out," with morale and energy falling fast.*

Finding #43. There are limited perceptions among principals that school-based management has contributed to enhanced instructional leadership by teachers, with diminishing district office resources cited as one reason for this occurring.

Students' Special Needs

A majority of principals who offered opinions agreed or strongly agreed that school-based management had some influence on meeting the needs of students in categories such as special education and academic challenge. This perception was supported by other data emerging from the study, particularly in respect of special education and special needs students, for example,

> *I cite a school that has been dealing with a significant number of Aboriginal students, and they have implemented some extremely sweeping changes to try and help deal with the needs of that population. That is something that they would probably not have been able to implement as easily or in such a sweeping manner under the old system of administration.* (Associate Superintendent)
>
> Interviewer: *Do you see that school-based management has any influence on student achievement in your school?*
>
> Respondent: *Only in terms of special needs. Otherwise, I would say no, I don't think it has any impact.* (Principal)

Finding #44. School-based management, in the perceptions of principals and district office staff, had impacted positively on meeting the particular needs of students, notably in the area of special education and special needs.

Diversion of Teacher Time

Over half of the district's principals perceived that school-based management had diverted teachers' time from teaching and learning functions to meetings and other such managerial activities. This perception was in alignment with the perceptions principals held about the impact of school-based management on their own responsibilities and consequent time commitments, as indicated in the discussion leading to Finding #37, and in the general perceptions noted in Table 6.12.

One principal did note that

> *[the] basic impact on staff and administration has been in planning on the most effective ways to utilize the funding allocation. It is difficult to say if school-based decision making, or the time of imposition during difficult economic times, had the most impact on the school.*

The district superintendent made the following telling observation,

> *I really believe that one of the things that at school level and on a district level that we will have to look at is time. So the real test here is if teachers at some point start to talk about how they can allocate the time available to achieve certain kinds of results, at that point we'll have the break through that will create better student achievement. And the test will be whether or not teachers are prepared to reassign and restructure time.*

Finding #45. In the perceptions of principals, school-based management had diverted the time of teachers from teaching and learning responsibilities to managerial functions associated with school-based management processes. The study has shown that a similar perception was held by a majority of principals about their own roles.

Principals' Instructional Leadership Roles

Evidence emerged from the review of the literature that the implementation of school-based management could affect the instructional leadership roles of principals in their schools (e.g., Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Murphy & Beck, 1994), despite research evidence which has shown that instructional leadership is not a prime role of principals in other forms of school management (e.g., Murphy, 1990). Using categories of leadership roles derived from the literature, perceptions were sought from the district's principals. Their responses are summarized in Table 8.4.

The data indicated that majorities of principals who offered opinions perceived that their instructional leadership roles had been enhanced in the areas of encouraging and monitoring of school-wide academic standards, their authority and control over class sizes and composition, and in permitting more appropriate balancing of specific program objectives with overall school goals. Slightly fewer principals who offered opinions perceived that their instructional leadership roles had been enhanced in areas of the selection of teachers, and in heightening teacher and parent awareness of curriculum content. Slightly fewer principals again who offered opinions perceived that their instructional roles had been enhanced in the areas of teacher supervision and evaluation.

Finding #46. Majorities of principals perceived that school-based management had affected their instructional leadership roles, notably in the areas of school-wide academic standards, class size and composition, and in balancing program objectives with overall school goals.

TABLE 8.4

School-based management influence on principals' instructional leadership roles

(*N* = 21)

Area	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Setting and monitoring academic standards	-	2 (9.5)	2 (9.5)	10 (47.6)	7 (33.3)
Authority over class size and composition	-	3 (14.3)	3 (14.3)	13 (61.9)	2 (9.5)
Supervision of teachers	-	6 (28.6)	8 (38.1)	5 (23.8)	2 (9.5)
Evaluation of teachers	-	6 (28.6)	8 (38.1)	6 (28.6)	1 (4.8)
Selection of teaching staff	-	5 (23.8)	7 (33.3)	9 (42.9)	-
Balancing program objectives and school goals	-	1 (4.8)	3 (14.3)	16 (76.2)	1 (4.8)
Heightening teacher awareness of curriculum content	-	5 (23.8)	7 (33.3)	7 (33.3)	2 (9.5)

TABLE 8.4
(Cont.)

Heightening parent awareness of curriculum content	-	4 (19.0)	6 (28.6)	9 (42.9)	2 (9.5)

Note. Figure in parentheses is frequency percent

Provincial Assessment Programs

Among the many changes impacting schools at the same time as the implementation of school-based management was a broadened program of provincial assessment of student achievement. The program was perceived as having some impact and influence on district and school operations, and may have masked the influence of other developments such as school-based management. This was a common response from both principals and district office staff in the study, for example,

> *I think the provincial achievement tests, along with the diploma examination results, have been a major influence on the performance of schools, along with public expectations that have been placed on schools.* (Associate Superintendent)
>
> *There are a number of variables affecting schools these days. Site-based management is one of them. One of the others is an increased focus on provincial exams. And I think certainly if I am trying to differentiate what's happening in schools, which of those variables is affecting schools, certainly the emphasis on provincial exams, and parental involvement in schools, are, I think, much higher in terms of creating changes in schools in the last ten years than site-based decision making.* (Principal)

Achievement variations. Several principals perceived that the somewhat fickle nature of student outcomes on achievement tests was a concern in measuring student achievement in this way, for example,

> *One of the problems with achievement tests being our major focus is that your kids change from year to year, so when you compare Grade Three kids with Grade Three kids, it can be two totally different groups. Your teachers may change. Our district is changing significantly.*

Finding #47. A perception existed among principals and district office staff that provincial student assessment programs have exerted considerable influence on school programs. Some principals also perceived that interpretations of such assessment program outcomes may not reflect the realities of student achievement in that they may not take cognizance of the many facets and elements which influence student achievement.

Non-Measurable Goals

The perceptions in Finding #47 about the complex nature of student achievement gave rise to other concerns about facets of student achievement which are not measurable through devices such as provincial assessment programs. The district superintendent expressed that perception, stating that

> *it depends what you mean by student achievement. If we're talking about student achievement in terms of academics, that's one item. If we're talking about student achievement in social or physical terms, you couldn't answer that for a decentralized or centralized system. So I would argue that, in terms of whether or not it has an impact on student achievement, we can't even measure it, we can't even begin to, because the only single measure that we have is academic achievement, and even that is incomplete because it is recognized that the student achievement measures only measure part of what it is that we're instructing on, relative to academic competence or outcomes.*

Principals held similar views, for example,

> *Once you're dealing with something that has to be placed in document form, there's a tendency to document things that are easily measurable. Site-based management, with its goals and objectives, is conducive to written communication that can be followed through on and evaluated, and much of education isn't like that. If a person doesn't be careful, those more invisible aspects of education such as self-esteem of students, and developing confidence and motivation, those daily interactive things that are very hard to measure, those things may be ignored.*

Data emerged from the document analysis which indicated that the district office had taken some steps to emphasize less tangible facets of district and school operations which may influence student achievement. For example, the district's Annual Education Results Report for 1995/1996, in addition to providing detailed information about student achievement as measured by provincial achievement tests, also provided data about the number of students identified with special needs within six weeks, and student satisfaction with schooling and services. While there was no attempt in the Report to link such data with school-based management, the data do indicate that perceptions about non-measurable goals are being recognized and addressed to some extent.

Finding #48. A perception existed among some principals and district office staff that student assessment programs may not assess less tangible facets of student achievement, and school-based management may have contributed to this difficulty because of a perceived emphasis in school-based management processes on observable and measurable goals.

Summary

In this chapter, perceptions of principals and district office staff about relationships between school-based management and student achievement, and factors affecting such perceptions, have been addressed. Perceptions of the general influence and impact of school-based management on student achievement were considered, as were perceptions of influences and impacts on teaching and learning processes. These perceptions were informed to some extent by perceptions about a range of teaching and learning roles at school level, and an examination of these was carried out. Principals' perceptions of the effects of school-based management on their instructional leadership roles were considered. Further, perceptions of the effects of the expanded provincial student assessment program, one of many change influences impacting on schools, were also examined, and a brief analysis of the nature and influence of non-measurable student achievement was conducted.

The analysis undertaken in the chapter yielded 11 findings

In Chapter 9, the final chapter, a summary of the study is undertaken, the study's conclusions are presented and discussed, and recommendations are made.

Summary of Findings

Finding #38. There was little evidence that principals and district office staff perceived that there were causal linkages between the implementation of school-based and student achievement. An array of reasons underpinned these perceptions, including the relatively short period of time since the implementation in the district, the reality that school-based management was but one change influence in the district, and because school-based management was not generally perceived by many as a major influence in the enhancement of student achievement levels. The significance of the last perception is heightened when considered in the light of Finding #10, that a majority of principals understood the goals of school-based management, with the enhancement of student achievement as a prime goal.

Finding #39. While a majority of principals who offered opinions perceived that school-based management was enhancing teaching and learning processes, there were indications in the data that perceptions existed that such causal linkages were tenuous.

Finding #40. A majority of principals who offered opinions perceived that school-based management had caused an increased focus on the acquisition of basic skills. However, the study did elicit some reluctance by both principals and district office staff to attribute the increase to school-based management.

Finding #41. While a majority of principals who offered opinions perceived that school-based management had contributed to increasing levels of teacher responsibility for instructional and classroom management decisions, and for student performance, there existed some reluctance among the principal cohort members to attribute these changes specifically to school-based management.

Finding #42. There was a perception among many principals and district staff that school-based management entailed heightened expectations of student achievement. This perception appeared to evolve from the stated underpinning philosophical basis for school-based management.

Finding #43. There are limited perceptions among principals that school-based management has contributed to enhanced instructional leadership by teachers, with diminishing district office resources cited as one reason for this occurring.

Finding #44. School-based management, in the perceptions of principals and district office staff, had impacted positively on meeting the particular needs of students, notably in the area of special education and special needs.

Finding #45. In the perceptions of principals, school-based management had diverted the time of teachers from teaching and learning responsibilities to managerial functions associated with school-based management processes. The study has shown that a similar perception was held by a majority of principals about their own roles.

Finding #46. Majorities of principals perceived that school-based management had affected their instructional leadership roles, notably in the areas of school-wide academic standards, class size and composition, and in balancing program objectives with overall school goals.

Finding #47. A perception existed among principals and district office staff that provincial student assessment programs have exerted considerable influence on school programs. Some principals also perceived that interpretations of such assessment program outcomes may not reflect the realities of student achievement in that they may not take cognizance of the many facets and elements which influence student achievement.

Finding #48. A perception existed among some principals and district office staff that student assessment programs may not assess less tangible facets of student achievement, and school-based management may have contributed to this difficulty because of a perceived emphasis in school-based management processes on observable and measurable goals.

CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In Chapter 9, the concluding chapter, a summary of the study is undertaken. The study's research questions are reviewed, as are their conception, justification, and the literature base informing the questions. A brief review of the conduct of the research, the data gathering methods, and analysis procedures is provided. The findings reached as outcomes of the data analysis are restated, and the study's conclusions based on the findings are presented and discussed. Some recommendations for research and practice in the district are made, and the chapter concludes with some personal reflections.

Summary of the Study

The study's rationale, research questions, review of the literature, method, and findings are summarized in this section.

Purpose

The study probed the perceptions of principals and school district administrators about the relationships between school-based management, the quality of school programs and student achievement in the context of the change to a school-based management environment in a school district of Alberta. In undertaking this, the study sought insights as to whether claims frequently made in the literature for the existence and efficacy of these relationships were justified, at least in the context of the one particular school district.

General Research Question

The study addressed the general research question of what perceptions were held by principals and school district administrators about the relationships between the phenomenon of school-based management, the quality of school programs and student achievement, and why such perceptions were held.

Specific Research Questions

The study addressed the following specific research questions:

1. What perceptions were held by principals about relationships between school-based management, the quality of educational programs and student achievement in their schools?
2. What perceptions were held by school district administrators about relationships between school-based management, the quality of educational programs and student achievement in schools in their district?
3. What factors influenced the perceptions held by principals?
4. What factors influenced the perceptions held by school district administrators?

Genesis of the Study

A conjunction of researcher experience in a school system which moved fairly speedily from the traditional model of centralized control and decision making, to one of school-level control and management of many functions, and the increasing adoption in school systems of forms of school-based management, provided fertile ground for the genesis of the study. The particular research focus of the study was conceived essentially in the researcher's interest in the influence of the phenomenon in schools and school systems, and was motivated by the very common claims in the literature of relationships between the quality of school programs, student achievement, and school-based management.

Justification for the Study

An examination of the quite extensive literature about school-based management readily indicated that much of the writing about the phenomenon is rhetorical and ideological in thrusts, confused about the terminology and definitional understandings of school-based management, and extensively characterized by uncertainty about the nature, substance, and issues of the philosophies and practices associated with school-based management. Further, despite the plethora of writings about the phenomenon, there was a serious lack of research evidence presented in the literature to illuminate in any clear manner the effects and thrusts of school-based management, and a concomitant dearth of theory about its influence and impact.

The increasing presence of school-based management in the education landscape is occurring in an era of ongoing change, reorganization, and restructuring in education, with a particular emphasis on school performance, including the enhancement of student achievement. Frequently, the concepts associated with school-based management are intermeshed with the language, concepts, purposes, and outcomes of other facets of school reform and restructuring. This contributed to the difficulty of attaining researched understandings from the literature of the influence and impact of school-based management.

Consequently, the study sought to examine school-based management as a conceptual entity, although not in isolation from other change forces and influences at work in schools and school districts, to examine perceptions of linkages between school-based management, the quality of school programs and student achievement, and whether the causal attributions of such relationships, so extant in the literature, were justifiable, at least in the context of the research site.

Review of the Literature

An extensive review of the literature was undertaken. Perspectives adopted in undertaking the review included that an understanding of the broad nature of school-based management necessarily preceded an examination of its influence and impact on the quality of school programs and on student achievement, and that school-based management, as a phenomenon, cannot be examined in isolation from the reform and restructuring influences at work in schools and school districts.

The review examined the problem of adequately defining school-based management, the theoretical foundations underpinning the concept, including the forces that are propelling the burgeoning phenomenon, its principles and goals, the relationships between school-based management and leadership, and relationships between school-based management and student achievement. The phenomenon is by no means universally welcomed as an appropriate educational development, nor perceived as a panacea for many of the current problems besetting education, as was demonstrated by the critique of school-based management included in the literature review. The emerging patterns of school-based management's influence were examined, including those involving leadership and student achievement, and these realities were considered in the light of expectations of the influence and impact of school-based management, as documented in the literature.

The review of the literature yielded a number of propositions which provided a broad conceptual framework, and which helped inform the study.

Conceptual Propositions

1. School-based management, while not a new concept, is an increasingly common phenomenon of the educational landscape of many schools and school districts in different parts of the world.

2. While the genesis of school-based management is unclear, it emanates from a confluence of succeeding waves of school reform, philosophical perspectives about

organizational and educational change, and a range of social, historical, political, and economic factors.

3. Definitional translucency and contestation surround school-based management. The phenomenon is interpreted and implemented in very diverse ways, varying from school to school, and from district to district.

4. Extensive arrays of outcomes are attributed to school-based management, frequently proleptically, and often in the absence of substantive evidence that such attributions are justified. The enhancement of school programs and student achievement are frequent such attributions.

5. School-based management is a process, not a product. The phenomenon is dynamic and subject to ongoing reconceptualization, and is enmeshed in a gamut of other change processes influencing schools and school systems.

6. Slowly emerging evidence of the impact and influence of school-based management provides an incomplete and somewhat incoherent picture, possibly reflecting the definitional and implementational diversity of the phenomenon, the unsubstantiated claims made for school-based management not being borne out in reality, and the nature and focus of the research itself.

7. There is a need to reach researched understandings of the nature and influences of the concept and processes as implemented, to begin to decipher the emerging evidence of the phenomenon's impact and influence, and to understand why such evidence may vary from the attributions for school-based management.

8. More specifically, the evidence that school-based management influences the quality of school programs and student achievement is limited, and that which is available is inconsistent and incoherent.

Research Design

A consideration of the nature of the research questions, the need to seek perceptions both before and after the implementation of school-based management, and the levels of resources available, led the researcher to focus the study on a school district which was in the early stages of implementation of school-based management. There were 21 schools in the district, and all principals participated in the research by completing a questionnaire survey, and a purposive sample of six principals and four district administrators participated in individual semistructured interviews. A document survey and analysis were also undertaken.

The research design was structured so that a broad sampling of perceptions of principals and district office staff could be obtained, and so that aspects of perceptions could also be probed in more depth. The design reflected the researcher's preference, in this context, for a coherentist perspective in both the research design and in the data analysis, in the belief that research methods drawn from both qualitative and quantitative research perspectives, with all their strengths and weaknesses, informed the other, and permitted a clearer, more coherent understanding of the phenomenon to emerge. The methods used in the study (a questionnaire survey, semistructured interviews, and a document analysis) permitted data triangulation.

Conduct of the Study

With the exception of some document collection, the data were gathered in the winter of 1996/1997. All 21 principals responded to the questionnaire survey over a period of approximately one month. Interviews were conducted with district office personnel in that period, and interviews with principals were conducted after the period. The district superintendent and each of the district's three associate superintendents were interviewed. The purposive sample of principals interviewed was arrived at through consultation with both district office staff and principals, and sought to reflect the types of schools in the district, some geographic balance, and a range of perspectives about and experiences with school-based management. Interview transcripts were reviewed by respondents, with the exception of two who specifically declined to do so. No respondents exercised their veto rights over transcript contents.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire survey data were initially analyzed using a computerized statistical analysis package (*SPSSx*). Descriptive statistics were appropriate for the study, with frequencies and frequency percentages used extensively. Interview data were analyzed in some detail using concepts, as defined by Berg (1995), as the basic unit of analysis. Documentary data were analyzed for content, providing some useful, though not extensive, insights into policy matters. Documentary data were not particularly useful in providing post-implementation insights.

Using the contents of the questionnaire survey as the main conceptual and analytical framework, the data were considered, focusing on several key areas. The areas were the policy and professional contexts of school-based management, and its impact and influence on school programs and student achievement. This detailed analysis yielded a series of findings which formed the basis of the study's conclusions.

Findings

The theoretical examination of the nature of perceptions, conducted in earlier chapters, revealed their pervasiveness, their complexity, and the difficulties posed for research in the area of perceptions. The analysis of the data, and the consequent findings, brought some measure of realism to the theoretical perspectives explored earlier. Considerable care was taken in reaching findings from the quite complex, and often differing, array of perceptions presented in the data, so that the findings made led to justifiable and truthful conclusions. The findings made are summarized below.

Policy and Professional Contexts

Finding #1. There was a clear articulation between the school-based management policies, including those relating to school councils, of Alberta Education, and those of Snowfields School District.

Finding #2. School-based management policies in both provincial and Snowfields School District contexts were predicated on the assumption that there will be educational benefits derived, particularly in the form of enhanced student achievement. The basis for such an assumption was not clearly stated in either context, unless it was the belief that there is a relationship between teaching, learning, decision making, and the processes of decision making at the point of decision implementation.

Finding #3. There was an assumed, though somewhat poorly articulated, relationship between school-based management and school councils in the policy documentation at both provincial and school district levels.

Implementation and General Influence and Impacts

Finding #4. There was some familiarity in the district with the philosophy and practices of school-based management prior to implementation. This was due to the district's existing devolutionary policies and practices, and to some awareness of developments in the Edmonton Public School District.

Finding #5. The anticipated provincial mandate was a very important, but not exclusive, element in the decision to implement school-based management in the district.

Finding #6. A majority of principals were generally positive about school-based management prior to its implementation, although some principals held strong reservations. Reasons underpinning principals' perceptions were diverse, and included motivation and leadership by principals, a welcoming of the opportunity for more local control, autonomy, and creativity, a wariness of the effects of change, and suspicions about the motivation for the introduction of school-based management.

Finding #7. District office staff were generally positive about school-based management prior to implementation, although some reservations were held which were focused largely on the effects of the processes on the standardization of services, and on system cohesiveness.

Finding #8. Principals perceived that they were consulted about the implementation of school-based management, and that they were involved in the preparation of the district's policies and procedures.

Finding #9. While principals and district office staff perceived that training and inservice about school-based management was necessary and provided, only slightly more than half of principals who offered opinions perceived that such programs were effective, and district office staff did not perceive that the programs were effective. Inexperience in the district with the phenomenon as it was implemented, and the accelerated rate of implementation appeared to be the reasons for the negative perceptions held.

Finding #10. Principals understood the stated goals of school-based management prior to its implementation.

Finding #11. There was clear division in principals' perceptions about school-based management being attuned to their specific school contexts, and most principals did not perceive that the rate of implementation took cognizance of such contexts. The study has indicated that the decision to implement was taken by the district for the district, and that individual schools were not given options about the nature and rate of implementation.

Finding #12. Principals and district office staff generally demonstrated trust about the implementation of school-based management, although there was also evidence of some mistrust and anxiety being present. Indications emerged from the data suggesting that suspicion of political motives at provincial level underpinned some mistrust.

Finding #13. Over half of the principals' cohort perceived that there was resistance to the implementation of school-based management from their principal colleagues, but principals did not perceive generally that there was significant resistance from elsewhere. Some district office staff perceived that there was resistance from the teachers' association. Possible reasons for principals' perceptions of resistance by other principals were cited in Finding #6.

Finding #14. Although the roles and influences of school councils in the district's school-based management environment were difficult to clearly discern and assess, principals and district office staff perceived that councils do have roles in the processes, but that the nature of such roles was unclear or was still developing, and appeared to be particularly sensitive to the specific nature of each school site.

Finding #15. The perceptions of principals were that, under school-based management, budgetary authority is held at the school, with less authority held in matters of staffing and school programs. Principals' perceptions indicated some uncertainty about curriculum authority among those who offered opinions.

Finding #16. Principals and district office staff perceived that, under school-based management, school autonomy and flexibility, and the ability to take initiatives had increased. However, patterns of responses to this ability were mixed at this stage of the implementation, and perceptions existed of some resistance to this ability.

Finding #17. District office personnel perceived that the role of the district office had changed under school-based management, while principals' perceptions of such changes were less conclusive. Principals generally perceived that their initiatives were supported by the district office, and that adequate information was provided to enable schools to make decisions. District office staff perceptions were that the information provided was not adequate. Perceptions of principals of their ability to influence district office decisions were not conclusive.

Finding #18. Principals perceived that school-based management had influenced school leadership in some ways including, in particular, making the leadership roles of principals more complex, and engendering patterns of shared leadership in schools, and reaching better quality decisions.

Finding #19. Under school-based management, principals perceived that accountability to parents and the district office had increased.

Finding #20. Principals and district office staff generally perceived that the implementation of school-based management was an ongoing, developmental process.

Finding #21. Neither principals nor district office staff perceived that a need or a desire existed in the district at the time of the study to recentralize devolved responsibilities. The flexibility and the ability to react to identified needs were some reasons that principals held such perceptions. Some district office staff perceived that efficiencies could be attained through some recentralization of services without impinging on the authority devolved to schools.

Influence and Impact on School Program Quality

Finding #22. School-based management created opportunities for school program quality to be influenced, and there were examples of this occurring in the school district. The degree of causality between such initiatives and school-based management was difficult to discern, and such causality may be influenced by other developments and activities in the district. Perceptions of enhanced quality appear to be influenced by the flexibility at school level afforded by school-based management,

Finding #23. Curriculum flexibility under school-based management was perceived by a majority of the principals who offered opinions to be restricted by provincial curriculum mandates. This finding is aligned with the perceptions summarized in part in Finding #15.

Finding #24. Better resource management has occurred at school level under school-based management.

Finding #25. A majority of principals and district office staff perceived that school-based management had contributed to the ability of schools to gain access to specialized staff and resources because of the financial and operational flexibility afforded schools by school-based management.

Finding #26. School-based management influenced, in the perceptions of principals and district office staff, the abilities of schools to develop instructional policy, and meet individual student differences, although school size, type, and location may have affected that ability. The flexibility afforded schools by school-based management policies appeared to be a major contributor to these perceptions.

Finding #27. Schools were beginning to use the flexibility associated with school-based management to develop instructional programs at school level. The provincial assessment programs may have inhibited initiatives in this area.

Finding #28. While a majority of principals offering opinions, and some district office staff, perceived that school-based management had contributed to closer relationships with parents at the school level, to the benefit of the quality of school programs, the nature of such relationships across the district was unclear.

Finding #29. School-based management has contributed to school-level collaborative, collegial planning in the district, including in the goal setting processes of School Education Plans.

Finding #30. Goal setting at the school level took cognizance of district and provincial goals.

Finding #31. While the study did not specifically address the degree of alignment between school and community goals, principals and district office staff perceived that there were efforts to involve school communities in goal setting. There was no evidence of misalignment between school and community goals.

Finding #32. A perception existed among principals of a relationship between budgets and school program goal setting. Although the possibility of school budgets dictating goals was also perceived by some principals, no evidence of this occurring emerged in the study.

Finding #33. Principals and district office staff perceived that teachers were contributing to goal setting at school level, but the pattern and influence of such contributions in schools across the district were unclear. A perception existed that school staff may not wish to be involved in many facets of school-based management.

Finding #34. School Education Plans, as an integral component of school-based management planning processes, and as a linkage to district and provincial policies and goals, reflected a strong emphasis on planning for both enhanced school program quality and enhanced student achievement.

Finding #35. A majority of principals perceived that, under school-based management, accountability for the quality of school programs had increased, and had led to the development of program quality performance indicators at school level.

Finding #36. In the perceptions of a majority of principals and district office staff, school-based management has facilitated and led to enhanced professional development programs in schools. Increased flexibility in resource usage at school level, and system facilitation of professional development, appeared to be contributing factors for these perceptions.

Finding #37. School-based management has created difficulties for schools because of the duality and demands of pedagogical and managerial roles, with principals and district office staff perceiving that time constraints posed particular difficulties. The relocation of managerial authority to schools was perceived as a prime source of these difficulties.

Influence and Impact on Student Achievement

Finding #38. There was little evidence that principals and district office staff perceived that there were causal linkages between the implementation of school-based management and student achievement. An array of reasons underpinned these perceptions, including the relatively short period of time since the implementation in the district, the reality that school-based management was but one change influence in the district, and because school-based management was generally not perceived as a major influence in the enhancement of student achievement levels. The significance of the last perception is heightened when considered in the light of Finding #10, that a majority of principals understood the goals of school-based management, with the enhancement of student achievement as a prime goal.

Finding #39. While a majority of principals who offered opinions perceived that school-based management was enhancing teaching and learning processes, there were indications in the data that perceptions existed that such causal linkages were tenuous.

Finding #40. A majority of principals who offered opinions perceived that school-based management had caused an increased focus on the acquisition of basic skills. However, the study did elicit some reluctance by both principals and district office staff to attribute the increase to school-based management.

Finding #41. While a majority of principals who offered opinions perceived that school-based management had contributed to increasing levels of teacher responsibility for instructional and classroom management decisions, and for student performance, there existed some reluctance among the principal cohort members to attribute these changes specifically to school-based management.

Finding #42. There was a perception among many principals and district staff that school-based management entailed heightened expectations of student achievement. This perception appeared to evolve from the stated underpinning philosophical basis for school-based management.

Finding #43. There are limited perceptions among principals that school-based management has contributed to enhanced instructional leadership by teachers, with diminishing district office resources cited as one reason for this occurring.

Finding #44. School-based management, in the perceptions of principals and district office staff, had impacted positively on meeting the particular needs of students, notably in the area of special education and special needs.

Finding #45. In the perceptions of principals, school-based management had diverted the time of teachers from teaching and learning responsibilities to managerial functions associated with school-based management processes. The study has shown that a similar perception was held by a majority of principals about their own roles.

Finding #46. Majorities of principals perceived that school-based management had affected their instructional leadership roles, notably in the areas of school-wide academic standards, class size and composition, and in balancing program objectives with overall school goals.

Finding #47. A perception existed among principals and district office staff that provincial student assessment programs have exerted considerable influence on school programs. Some principals also perceived that interpretations of such assessment program outcomes may not reflect the realities of student achievement in that they may not take cognizance of the many facets and elements which influence student achievement.

Finding #48. A perception existed among some principals and district office staff that student assessment programs may not assess less tangible facets of student achievement, and school-based management may have contributed to this difficulty because of a perceived emphasis in school-based management processes on observable and measurable goals.

Conclusions and Discussion

The observation by Yin (1989) that a case study "tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result" (pp. 22-23) has guided the study to a large extent, facilitating the researcher reaching a series of findings and conclusions which addressed the challenge for case studies set out by Yin. However, the complex nature of the perceptions compiled in the study created a particular problem for the researcher, as stated by LeCompte and Preissle (1993), "researcher-constructed descriptions of reality may be quite different from the meanings that participants use to construct reality" (p. 235). The challenge in this section is to present and discuss justifiable conclusions which are based in the study's array of findings, and which take heed of the caution issued by LeCompte and Preissle.

Policy Contexts

Policy Linkages and Causal Relationships

The researcher concludes that there were distinct policy linkages among the school-based management policies and goals established in each school's Education Plan, the district's Education Plan, and in the provincial policies and directions for education as promulgated in the Three-Year Business Plans (Finding #1). These linkages confirmed the provincial thrust of a policy-driven, results-based management system across school, school district, and provincial levels.

Further, the emphasis placed on student achievement in policy statements at each level established linkages between student achievement as an outcome of school-based management, and the policy directions established at each level (Findings #1, #2, #10, and #34). Clune (1990) has described this type of linkaging as a "chain of causation" (p. 396). Using the concept of such chains, Clune noted that "a fundamental strategy for causational indicators is the inclusion of input, process, and outcome variables" (p. 396). While the process variable of school-based management is provincially mandated conceptually but not in form, it is concluded that it was a potent element in the cycle of the results-based management system established by the provincial authority, affecting the operations of the school district and the schools

(Finding #1). The significance of this was elaborated by Rosenholtz (1991), "whatever impact education policy has on school success compared to other factors, it is significantly affected by the quality of the linkages between policy and the intended beneficiaries of that policy, namely teachers and students" (p. 205).

While the policy linkages were readily established in the study, the researcher concludes that they did not lead to a determination of the rationale underpinning assumptions of causal linkages between heightened student achievement and the implementation of school-based management in policy statements and in practice in the district. This conclusion, based on Finding #2, was a not unanticipated outcome of the study, if the literature provided any indications of experiences elsewhere. Weiss, Cambone, and Wyeth (1992), for example, have noted that "no one has explicated the series of assumptions that would lead from teacher involvement [in decision making] to student performance" (p. 365). Bimber (1994) postulated that

> it may be that the connection between institutional structure and organizational performance is weak: The assumption that removing constraints will result in more initiatives, better instruction, and improved schools is wrong. Or it may be that decentralization efforts are not producing significant changes in the institutional structure in the first place. (p. viii)

Whatever the problem may be, the researcher has confirmed, at the level of policy analysis, the difficulty of establishing causal linkages between school-based management, changes in the quality of school programs, and levels of student achievement.

School Councils and School-Based Management

The researcher concludes that policies about school councils at provincial and district level assumed that there were linkages between the advent of councils and the implementation of school-based management, although such linkages were inadequately articulated (Finding #3). This was in some contrast to the policy statements about school-based management and student achievement (Findings #1 and #2), and despite the fact that both sets of policies were nested generally in the provincial and district focus on the enhancement of the quality of school programs and student achievement. Bimber (1994) observed that "it is too soon to know whether governance changes can be successful at improving school outcomes but not too soon to see that decentralization efforts can easily fail to produce real changes in governance" (p. 5). Should the latter prove to be the case, there are implications for the assumptions in policies of linkages between school councils and school-based management, and ultimately, through chains of causation, to the quality of school programs and levels of student achievement.

Implementational Contexts

Implementation Stages

Several studies of the implementation of school-based management (Brown & Ozembloski, 1996; Ozembloski & Brown, 1994) have provided a useful template for constructing stages of change in school-based management processes known as the triphasic model. The three phases of implementation identified in the model are the adoption phase, concerned essentially with sharing information about the school-based management model, the implementation phase, where the change is effected through policies and institutional behavior, and the continuation phase, where the practices become routine. The overall findings of the study indicated that the implementation processes in the school district are approaching the continuation phase, if indeed they have not already entered that phase.

Perceptions and Attitudes

The researcher concludes that, in general, the perceptions of principals and district office staff towards the implementation of school-based management were positive, although some mistrust and anxiety existed (Findings #6, #7, and #12). A range of reasons contributed to this perception, including the prior experience in the district with extensive levels of devolved authority, the influence of the developments in the Edmonton Public School District (Finding #4), leadership and motivation by principals (Finding #6), and perceptions by principals that they were consulted and involved in the development of district policies and practices (Finding #8). The anticipation of the provincial mandating of school-based management was also a factor influencing perceptions (Finding #5). This conclusion supported, in general, the contentions of Fullan (1991) and David (1989) that leadership and district culture are critically important elements in the successful implementation of school-based management.

Despite the existence of a generally positive climate for the implementation, principals did perceive some levels of resistance among their fellow principals, as well as some anxiety and mistrust (Findings #13, #12, and #6). As the district has moved through the stages of the triphasic model, resistance among principals appeared to be diminishing (Findings #20 and #21). Bailey (1994), in an examination of teacher resistance to change, demonstrated both that teaching is becoming an increasingly complex activity, and that resistance to change is itself a complex phenomenon. Citing Fullan and Hargreaves (1991), Bailey suggested that the innovations are not solutions to the problems created by this complexity, noting that "the solution becomes the problem. Innovations are not making the teacher's job more manageable. They are making it worse. Overload of expectations and fragmented solutions remain the number one problem" (p. 1). The examples given in Finding #6 and other data included in the study indicated that sources of principals' resistance were complex, ranging across a number of perceptions, and did not present a coherent picture. However, those same sources of resistance indicated that the perspectives of Bailey, Fullan, and Hargreaves are as applicable to principals as they are to teachers.

Goals

The goal of enhanced student achievement through school-based management permeated policy and procedural statements at all levels, and the researcher concludes that principals and district office staff understood that enhancing student achievement was a prime goal (Findings #10 and #30). However, an understanding of this goal did not necessarily translate into a belief that such a goal was feasible, attainable, or realistic, as Finding #38 has shown. From an implementational perspective, understanding of the goals of innovations and commitment to them by organizational leaders assume some importance. Murphy (1990) observed that "the more effective principals have a clear sense of direction for their schools that they are able to articulate clearly. Less effective principals seem to possess little sense of direction" (p. 167). However, Rosenholtz (1991) also noted that "teachers, students, administrators, parents, politicians, and other interest groups all bring to bear a variety of perspectives and values which inevitably ensure that school goals will be multiple, shifting and frequently disputed" (p. 13). In this "swirl of competing forces" (Rosenholtz, p. 13), the imposed goal of enhanced student achievement through school-based management that school and district leaders understood but may not have accepted as realistic, may well have contributed to dissonance between leadership effectiveness and a commitment to the attainment of such a goal. Further, in the context of Snowfields School District, principals' perceptions of little linkaging between the rate of implementation and their specific school contexts, and the perceptions of some that the implementation of school-based management was not attuned to the particular circumstances of their schools (Finding #11), may well have contributed to the possibility of such dissonance.

Professional Development

The study's data indicated that the limited amount of time devoted to pre-implementational preparations, the rate of implementation, the pressures imposed by other change influences, the limited amount of resources that could be directed to implementation preparations, and a focus on procedural and technical matters, resulted in a professional development program that was perceived as being barely adequate. It is concluded, therefore, that less than full advantage of a critical professional development opportunity had been taken (Finding #9). However, the stage of implementation indicated by the triphasic model, and the perception among principals and district office staff that the development of school-based management was ongoing and was influencing leadership patterns (Findings #18 and #20) mean that other opportunities for professional development are being created. There is evidence in recent literature about school-based management that this is a matter of some importance. Sheppard and Devereaux (1997), after a study of leadership training for effective school-based management, suggested that "some (perhaps many?) school principals have not developed the leadership capacity to enlist 'the hearts and minds of followers through inclusion and participation' that is needed to bring about the improvements anticipated by the promoters of school councils and site-based management" (p. 6). They also suggested that

> unless time and resources are provided for the development of leadership for change, so that principals are prepared to work with others in a manner effective site-based management requires, a decentralization initiative is no more likely to succeed than past efforts at change . . . the implementation process must include attention to the professional development and training needs of those who will serve in leadership positions. (p. 6)

Clearly, this applies both to principals and district leaders who currently have carriage of the implementation processes, and to those who will be moving into such leadership positions, and in view of the conclusion reached about professional development in the school district, the suggestion is germane to that context.

Boundaries of Authority

The researcher concludes that in Snowfields School District, a considerable amount of administrative, budgetary, staffing, and school program authority had been devolved to schools. However, there is also evidence in the study of uncertainty about the level of curriculum authority which has been devolved (Finding #15). There is little doubt that the provincial authority exerts a strong controlling influence over curriculum matters through the mandating of curriculum with specifically detailed content, and through an extended provincial student assessment program (Findings #23 and #47).

However, the uncertainty which emerged in the perceptions of principals about the degrees of flexibility and initiative that could be taken in curriculum implementation, coupled with the pervasive influence in curriculum matters of the provincial authority, appears to have important implications for the influence of school-based management on the enhancement of school program quality and student achievement.

Clune (1990) noted that "high quality curriculum actually delivered to students in the classroom is the variable with the single greatest impact on student performance" (p. 391). Clune also concluded that two combinations of governance circumstances have the greatest impact on student achievement. These are "the centralized system for curriculum alignment, supplemented by supportive, decentralizing elements, and the decentralized system of mission-oriented school improvement supplemented by parental choice" (p. 392). Clune concluded that the two systems are ultimately incompatible because they place the authority for decisions about curriculum content at different levels in education systems.

There seemed to be little choice for the schools in the district but to operate in a mode closely resembling Clune's conception of a centralized system of curriculum control, with decentralizing elements. The researcher formed no conclusions about the efficacy of the approach, however the findings and other data did show that some principals were prepared to use the autonomy, flexibility, and the ability to take initiatives (Finding #16), and the perception that the district office is generally supportive of school's initiatives (Finding #17), to test the boundaries of authority being established in the district through school-based management policy development, and through procedural and implementational experience. In the light of the key responsibility of all schools to meet the needs of students, the use of autonomy and flexibility would seem to be a professional imperative. Rosenholtz (1991) supported this contention,

> Instructional goals . . . are neither static nor intractable. Schools may reformulate or reinterpret them as conditions within the workplace require it,

> with shifts in the school's clientele, perhaps, or as different student needs emerge, or through the discovery of new technical knowledge, bringing with it reappraisal of the way objectives are currently being met. Through all of this, the school's abstract goals of student learning remain intact; it is only their application that is subject to analysis and alteration. (p. 16)

Leadership

The theme of the critical importance of leadership in the effective implementation of school-based management is extant in the literature. Research findings such as those of Sheppard and Devereaux (1997) are beginning to provide a research base for understanding its importance in applied school-based management contexts. Bunin (1996) observed that "positive changes will result only if the leadership style moves to one of influence as opposed to one of control. . . . Once the process of school-based management begins to take shape, the administrator assumes a role between that of director and facilitator" (p. 21). The researcher concludes that school-based management was beginning to influence leadership patterns and styles, including those of principals, at both district and school levels, although a clear pattern of change and influence was still emerging (Finding #18).

A clear implication emerging from this conclusion, supported by the professional development needs as outlined by Sheppard and Devereaux (1997), and the suggestions made about professional development, is that changing leadership patterns should not be left to chance, given the critical importance of leadership in school-based management processes. The relatively short period of school-based management implementation in the district has resulted in changes in leadership patterns. It is, therefore, incumbent upon principals and district administrators to nurture the process for the enhancement of the quality and influence of leadership patterns, and for progress toward achievable school and district goals.

District Office Ecology

The researcher concludes that the reorganization of the district office into sites, brought about by the provincially imposed capping of administrative expenditure, and by the district's move to a school-based management mode of operations, represented a major change of roles and realignment of authority for the district office, and was perceived as such by district office personnel (Findings #47). The district office's revised roles moved the office from a more traditional, bureaucratic mode to one where support and advisory roles were tailored to the needs and contextual elasticity generated by the specific circumstances of each school site. However, it is also concluded that some uncertainty surrounded principals' perceptions of the reorganization, even though principals also perceived some practical effects in that the district office was supportive of school-level initiatives, and provided information appropriate for schools' needs in their decision making (Finding #17).

Data which emerged in the study indicated that the cultural change represented by the revised roles of the district office was substantial, despite the district's history of devolving responsibilities and authority to schools. When that cultural change is coupled with the comparatively early stage of implementation, therein may be found some of the reasons for the degree of principals' uncertainty found by the study. Mohrman and Wohlstetter (1994) proposed a series of principles which grew out of their analysis of school-based management. They noted, as one principle, that "school-based management cannot be adopted as an innovation or as a program. It is a systemic change that requires a transition to a new way of managing and a new logic of organizing" (p. 256). They also noted that

> the large-scale transition will include the redesign of organizational systems to ensure that as power is moved, knowledge and skills are developed and information is shared. As new structures are designed, the organization will have to determine the roles of these new structures and how they relate to one another and to other existing roles and structures. (p. 257)

The district superintendent described the transition in terms of a maturity continuum, with the system gradually adjusting to the realignment of responsibilities, and the shifts in the loci of power, control, and decision making. Tymko (1995) summarized the changing ecology of school districts in school-based management environments thus,

> The organizational form of not only the central office but the system will be dynamic, emerging and receding in a truly service-oriented mode as the needs of students, parents and communities change in concert with other changes in the world. This should not be a cause for alarm, but reason for great hope. (p. 8)

School Councils

The researcher concludes that uncertainty was a strong element in the perceptions of principals and district office staff about the nature of the roles of school councils in school-based management processes (Finding #14). The assumptions of linkages among the implementation of school-based management, the advent of school councils, and enhanced student achievement have been considered. The finding of uncertainty in principals' and district office personnel's perceptions suggested that the linkages, if they do exist, may be more complicated than the policy statements seemed to assume. Clune (1990) concluded that "no matter how specific we are about the description of governance structures, other factors intervene in the success of failure of the structures in producing designated outcomes" (p. 416). Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz (1990b) have suggested that governance and organizational changes may serve symbolic purposes quite apart from educational outcomes. Undoubtedly, symbolic intentions are part of the policy thrusts of school-based management and school councils, as evidenced in Chapter 5. That being the case, Clune suggested several general approaches which may result in closer alignments between symbolism and educational outcomes. He suggested that rather than making assumptions about linkages, "governance systems must be designed around achievement in order to produce achievement gains" (p. 414). Second, he suggested that "to understand how to increase achievement, we would need to study what governance does, rather than what governance is" (p. 398). Should uncertainty continue to surround the roles of school councils in school-based management processes in the district as the implementation proceeds and develops, these suggestions may offer some potential for an increased understanding of the nature of any linkages among councils, school-based management, and educational outcomes.

An Ongoing, Developmental Process

Glickman (1990) detected seven ironies of school empowerment processes, with the first being that "the more an empowered school improves, the more apparent it is that there's more to be improved" (p. 70). It is concluded that principals and district office personnel generally perceived that school-based management was both ongoing and developmental (Finding #20). This suggests that the third phase of the triphasic model will be an extended process, or that there are developmental dimensions beyond the stage of continuation. This suggestion is enhanced by the conclusion that principals and district office staff did not wish that the authority and control vested in schools be recentralized (Finding #21). These conclusions further suggest that both the eventual forms and outcomes of school-based management are very difficult to estimate, and that the implementational processes may be more influential than policy directives in generating forms and outcomes.

School-Based Management and School Program Quality

General Perceptions

The researcher concludes that school-based management was exerting some positive influences on the quality of school programs in schools in the district, although the nature and degree of the causality was unclear, and such influences were not uniform across schools. It is also concluded that the flexibility afforded schools in program design and delivery was an important influence in shaping this perception (Finding #22).

These conclusions are in accord with some of the findings of other studies (e.g., Jenkins, Ronk, Schrag, Rude, & Stowitschek, 1994; White, 1992), and supported some of the contentions in the literature that decision making at the point of delivery of services, coupled with appropriate flexibility, should result in educational dividends in some form (e.g., Candoli, 1995; Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1993). The conclusions must be tempered somewhat by the awareness that a range of other change influences were impacting on schools and the school district at the same time as school-based management.

The general perception of a relationship between school-based management and the quality of school programs was influenced by perceptions of relationships between program quality and other elements which structure school programs. These are now considered.

Resources

Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1994), in their analysis of school-based management, noted that

> a challenge . . . is for districts and schools to learn how to redirect existing resources. This will require that decision makers develop the capability to conduct systematic analyses to make and justify informed decisions about resource tradeoffs. Participative structures and processes will have to be designed and managed as they result in more rather than less efficient use of resources. (p. 282)

The researcher concludes that this challenge was being met in the district in that principals and district office staff perceived that better use was being made of resources, and that schools were better able to access specialized resources (Findings #24 and #25).

Instructional Policy and Program Initiatives

Within limits imposed by factors such as school size and type, it is concluded that school-based management had influenced the ability of schools to develop instructional policy and to meet individual needs in students, and that school-level instructional program initiatives were beginning to occur (Findings #26 and #27). These conclusions accord closely with views expressed in the literature that needs of students can best be met through decisions being made by those with the closest knowledge of such needs (e.g., Chubb & Moe, 1990; Greenhalgh, 1984). Indeed, this emerged in the literature as a key underpinning principle of school-based management, and appears to be borne out by the conclusions reached in respect of instructional policy, individual differences, and program initiatives in the district.

Goals

The researcher concludes that the cycle of a results-based, policy-driven management system mandated by the provincial authority was found to be having some influence on planning at school level, and, consequently on the potential to influence the quality of school programs. In particular, it is further concluded that in the perceptions of principals and district office staff, schools took some cognizance of district and provincial goals in their planning under school-based management policies and practices (Finding #30), that the planning cycle had influenced patterns of collaborative, collegial planning in school goal setting (Finding #29), that teachers were contributing to school-level goal setting (Finding #33), and that goal setting reflected a strong emphasis on enhancing school program quality and student achievement (Finding #34). Mohrman and Wohlstetter (1994) established, as one principle of the implementation of school-based management, that "if school-based management is to result in improved school outcomes, it must be implemented in the context of goals for the educational process" (p. 258). They further observed that

> the bottom line is that innovations have to have meaning to people if they are to be able to implement them effectively and achieve organizational impact. One part of the shared meaning that must be developed is the goals of the change process--the values that the organization is trying to achieve. (p. 259)

The conclusions reached, which must be considered somewhat tentative at the stage of implementation in the district, offer some promise that goals and goal-setting processes at school level have the potential to contribute to the quality of school programs and student achievement.

The goal setting processes of school-based management in the district required that schools establish both Education Plans and Budget Plans. However, the study found no evidence of perceptions of the budgets of schools dictating the goals of schools (Finding #32). This conclusion accorded with that reached by Knight (1993) that

> it appears that decentralization in general (and financial delegation in particular) has a *facilitating* and perhaps a *gearing* effect on schools that experience it. It facilitates because of the flexibility and additional choices that it offers; and gears because it tends to strengthen school management, planning and participation. It does not necessarily alter the values, aims, expectations or classroom practices of the school. (p. 139, author's emphases)

Accountability

It is a conclusion that, in the perceptions of principals, accountability to parents and the district office for the quality of school programs had increased, and that consequently, performance indicators were being developed for school program quality (Finding #35). This is not an uncommon occurrence, as indicated by Hattie (1990), "associated with trends to decentralize educational decision making there is a concerted movement towards accountability via school-based management, standardized testing, and performance indices" (p. 101). Hattie postulated that greater autonomy of school-level decision making contributed to greater system ignorance of what is occurring in schools, hence creating a need for accountability forms. He concluded that "without accountability, all parties will continue in ignorance and this is a heinous crime in an activity aimed at increasing opportunities and enhancing learning" (p. 116). Enhanced accountability processes focused on school program quality would appear to be negating this possibility to some extent in the school district.

Professional Development

The researcher has concluded that the ongoing implementation of school-based management had created opportunities for professional development, as has been noted. It is also concluded that professional development programs at school level were being enhanced by school-based management (Finding #36). This clearly has the potential to influence the quality of school programs. The specific nature of the professional development was not elicited in the study. However, the overall enhancement of programs through school-based management bodes well for the enhancement of organizational learning. Duignan (1990) observed that "effective school-based management requires organizational learning systems that encourage reflection, criticism, assessment, and negotiation" (p. 337). Conditions that facilitate such organizational learning are being established under school-based management in the district.

Relationships with Parents

It has been shown that some ambivalence and uncertainty surrounded parental involvement in school-based management processes through the formal mechanisms of school councils. The researcher also concludes that while less uncertainty surrounded perceptions that the phenomenon had contributed to closer relationships with parents, the nature of the changed relationships was unclear, as was its influence on the quality of school programs (Finding #28). The researcher also found no evidence of misalignment between school and community goals for schooling, and that school accountability to parents had increased under school-based management (Findings #31, #35, and #19). It can be further concluded, therefore, that school-based management is enhancing conditions in schools which contribute to changing relationships with parents, and that changing patterns of accountability to parents may have the potential to influence the quality of school programs.

Inhibiting Elements

The review of the literature has shown that school-based management can influence schools in ways that also inhibit the enhancement of the quality of school endeavors, particularly in the creation of conflict between managerial and pedagogical roles, and in the effective use of teachers' time. Chapman (1990), for example, citing Conway (1984), noted that "some consultation is critical for quality teaching so that teachers are informed, but that participation should not create a situation in which the teacher is distanced from the teaching function" (p. 237). The researcher concludes that, in the perceptions of principals and district office staff, role duality and time diversion from the core teaching and learning tasks of the school were causing difficulties under school-based management (Findings #37 and #45). It can be concluded that such difficulty has potential to negatively influence the quality of school programs.

School-Based Management and Student Achievement

General Perceptions

The researcher has previously concluded that principals did understand that enhanced student achievement was a prime goal of school-based management, and that both principals and district office staff perceived that school-based management was creating and enabling opportunities for the enhancement of school programs. It is further concluded that principals had perceived that school-based management had heightened expectations of student achievement (Finding #42). Despite these conclusions, data in the study also lead to the conclusion that there was little to indicate that those perceptions translated into a perception of causal linkaging between the phenomenon and enhanced student achievement (Finding #38).

Given the pervasiveness of the focus on enhanced student achievement as an outcome of school-based management, this is a critical conclusion arising from the study. The reasons why such perceptions were held were determined in the study to be both complex and diverse, as noted in the findings. The most telling reason to emerge was that principals and district office staff clearly did not perceive that school-based management was, or would be, a major influence on student achievement.

The review of the literature clearly indicated that the focus on enhanced student achievement permeated much of that literature (e.g., David, 1995/1996; Peterson, 1991), and that evidence of such outcomes was elusive (e.g., Hess, 1992). It must be concluded, in the context of the study's limitations and delimitations, and the stage of implementation of school-based management at which the study was conducted, that the justification of enhanced student achievement claimed, often proleptically, for the phenomenon cannot be upheld. This conclusion supports the general thrusts of research findings in the literature. Weiss, Cambone, and Wyeth (1992) posed an obvious question, "if the link to improved student performance is so problematical, should this particular aspect of reform be getting all the attention that it is receiving?" (p. 365). The conclusion is given added emphasis in the context of Snowfields School District by the particular conclusions that principals understood that enhanced student achievement was a prime anticipated outcome of school-based management, and that the phenomenon was contributing to conditions, notably the quality of school programs, which should theoretically contribute to student achievement.

Core Technology of Schooling

The researcher concludes that the range of change influences impacting the schools and the district was an important reason why changes in aspects of the core technology of schools were generally not attributed, or attributed with some reluctance, to school-based management, in the perceptions of the district's principals (Finding #38). The enhancement of teaching and learning processes, an increased focus on the acquisition of basic skills, and levels of teacher responsibility for instructional decisions and student performance have all been influenced by the phenomenon (Findings #39, #40, and #41), but reluctance existed among principals in attributing changes to direct and causal relationships with school-based management. Only in the area of meeting special needs was this not the case (Finding #44). While a plethora of change influences made causal relationships between school-based management, changes in core technology, and student achievement difficult to discern, this does not appear to adequately explain the perceptions of principals. Hattie (1990) has suggested that product gains should not be confused with process gains. He observed that "current trends towards process outcomes are seriously misguided in their attempts to specify educational outcomes, largely because they confuse process as outcomes with progress towards outcomes" (p. 106). District policies do not specify how the processes of school-based management are to be assessed for progress towards goals, yet considerable attention is devoted to assessing progress towards the assumed outcome of enhanced student achievement. It can be concluded, therefore, that Hattie's postulation is accurate in this case.

Teacher Instructional Leadership

The researcher concludes that principals perceived that, in a limited way, school-based management had influenced the development of instructional leadership by teachers, with the decline in centrally available support services being the main reason cited for this perception (Finding #43). The early stage of implementation of school-based management in the district may also have been a factor in the perceptions held. However, these perceptions may hold the seeds of a potentially important influence on both school program quality and student achievement when aligned with the perceived enhancement of collegial, collaborative planning in schools (Finding #29). Rosenholtz (1991) has concluded that "collective commitment to student learning in collaborative settings directs the definition of student learning toward those colleagues who instruct as well as they inspire, awaking all sorts of teaching possibilities in others" (p. 68).

A justifiable conclusion about the influence of heightened teacher instructional leadership on student achievement in a school-based management environment cannot be reached at this stage of the implementation. However, it can be concluded that the influence of the phenomenon on teacher instructional leadership may offer some potential for the enhancement of school-level pedagogic practice.

Principals' Instructional Leadership

Murphy (1990) observed that "there is a considerable contrast between descriptions of the preferred role for school principals in the areas of curriculum and instruction and chronicles of how these executives actually behave" (p. 164). Murphy also cited extensive research data which clearly indicated that instructional leadership in schools by principals was not to the fore in principals' activities. However, the researcher concludes that, in several areas of operations, principals perceived that their instructional leadership roles have been considerably enhanced, for example, in the area of school-wide academic standards (Finding #46), and to a lesser extent in several other areas, for example, in the selection of teachers (see Table 8.4).

This is an outcome of some note. The data which emerged in the study clearly suggested the conclusion, which is in keeping with some proleptic claims made in the literature, and in contrast to a considerable amount of other research data which found that, in other management environment styles, instructional leadership was not perceived as a prime role in practice. The influence of these changing roles of principals was not clear from the study's data, but is reasonable to conclude that the changes are conducive to promoting a school environment in which student achievement may be enhanced.

Assessment Programs

In the range of change influences impacting the schools and the school district, the researcher concludes that the provincially mandated and expanded student assessment program has been one of some importance, in the perceptions of both principals and district office staff (Finding #47). However, the influence of the assessment programs, coupled with the nature of the programs and the inherent difficulties associated with standardized assessment programs (Finding #48), posed some difficulties in reaching justifiable conclusions, at this stage of the school-based management implementation, about the relative influence of this and other changes on student achievement. Further, the influence of provincial standardized programs in a district embracing a school-based management environment exemplified the dynamic tension between the forces of centralization and those of decentralization, a phenomenon well recognized in the literature. In respect of such tension and student assessment programs, Johnson and Boles (1994) commented that

> to the extent that schools are expected to meet districtwide goals, they need information about their performance relative to those goals. If, on the other hand, schools are accountable primarily to their students and parents, then they need information about the extent to which they are meeting their clients' needs. (p. 128)

Using these criteria, and the data which emerged in the study, it can be concluded that in Snowfields School District, the former is the prevalent form of information. Johnson and Boles' suggestion that assessment information systems are needed which provide data about progress towards district goals (and hence, through the chains of causation, towards the provincial goals), as well as goals specific to school sites, has important ramifications for the district. Findings #47 and #48 indicate that the need for such an approach in the district is a reasonable conclusion to be reached in the study. Promising beginnings were evident in the local establishment and review of school goals, and in the emphasis being placed in district reporting on progress towards goals other than academic goals.

Time

The problem of time being diverted from teaching and learning activities to those which are managerial in nature was a consistent finding in various facets of the study. In the perceptions of principals, this problem had the potential to exert some influence in the relationship between school-based management and student achievement (Findings #37 and #45).

Murphy (1990) has observed that "there is strong evidence that allocated, engaged, and academic learning time are related to achievement" (p. 171), and that "instructional leaders are also active in protecting instructional time" (p. 172). Given the clarity of these findings in the study, a reasonable conclusion that can be reached is that the protection of teaching, learning, and instructional leadership time may be becoming a prime challenge for principals as school-based management processes unfold in the district.

School Program Quality and Student Achievement

The disparity between perceptions that school-based management was having some positive influence on the quality of school programs, and the perceptions that the phenomenon was not influencing levels of student achievement, emerged with some clarity in the study's findings and conclusions. The reasons for this disparity, as far as could be determined, were complex and varied, with an unwillingness by principals and district office staff to accept that school-based management was, or was able to, influence student achievement, being a prime factor in the conclusion. Dimmock (1993) stated that

> the critical challenge is to connect the features associated with school-based management with factors affecting student learning. If the functional connections can be achieved so that autonomy, flexibility, responsiveness, planning, participation, collaboration and self-efficacy have maximum impact on learning, teaching, climate and curriculum structure and content, then improved student learning may be achieved. (pp. 18-19)

Conclusions reached in the study such as the indications of a generally positive influence by school-based management on school program quality, and the enhancing of principals' instructional leadership roles, lead to the further conclusion that school-based management is in fact influencing some conditions in schools which may eventually lead to enhanced student achievement, as envisaged by Dimmock.

Recommendations

The study examined several specific aspects of school-based management in the context of its implementation in one smaller school district in Alberta. Although school-based management is a burgeoning phenomenon and is being implemented in many school systems, claims of generalizability of the study's findings and conclusions beyond the research site are not made for a variety of reasons explicated in the study.

Notwithstanding, some recommendations can be made for both practice and research in the context of the district which may have applicability in other districts and schools embarking on the implementation of school-based management, and for which the knowledge and theory generated by this study may have some utility in learning from the experiences of Snowfields School District.

Recommendations for Practice

The findings made and the conclusions reached in the study suggested a number of recommendations for practice in the school district.

Guiding Principles

The researcher concluded that there were few perceptions of direct, causal linkages between school-based management and student achievement, while at the same time concluding that there were perceptions of linkages between the quality of school programs, principals' instructional leadership, and other facets of school operations, and school-based management. The latter linkages are laudable developments in themselves. Hence, rather than continue to imbue the policies of school-based management with a guiding principle that school and district leaders have little faith in at this time, these conclusions lead to a recommendation that the guiding principles should be revisited.

Recommendation #1. That Snowfields School District reexamine the underpinning principles of its school-based management policies and practices to ensure that they reflect beliefs and realities, especially in respect of student achievement, rather than resting on unsubstantiated claims and ephemeral hopes.

Core Technology

If school performance is to be enhanced, the prime focus of all school endeavors must be the core technology of teaching and learning. Conclusions arose from the study that school-based management was causing diversions from this focus, especially in terms of time. However, conclusions were also reached that school-based management processes were in fact enhancing the instructional leadership roles of principals in some ways.

Recommendation #2. That school and district leaders examine ways in which the prime focus on the core technology of schools can be enhanced by the amelioration of negative aspects of implementation such as time diversion, and the encouragement of positive aspects such as principals' instructional leadership.

Professional Development

The confirmation in the study's data of the importance of leadership in school-based management processes, coupled with the conclusions reached that school-based management was influencing leadership patterns and that the phenomenon was ongoing and developmental in the district, means that professional development assumes a vital role in these processes. If school-based management is to become an enduring feature of the district's educational landscape, rather than displaying the evanescence so common to many educational innovations, there is a need to develop leadership skills and knowledge in both the current and next generation of leaders, to meet the challenges of ongoing development.

Recommendation #3. That ongoing professional development is essential, especially in the area of leadership. Such professional development should move beyond procedural and technical matters of an administrative nature, and focus on developing the particular leadership qualities and skills, for example, collegial leadership styles, that are needed to meet the challenges posed by school-based management, and develop the potential of positive influences which emerged in the study, such as enhanced principals' instructional leadership.

Student Assessment

It is a conclusion in the study that the influence of provincial student assessment programs has been quite extensive in the district. The study demonstrated a need for a balanced assessment program which reflects both provincial and district goals, and goals which are specific to the particular situation of each school site.

Recommendation #4. That student assessment programs in the district be reassessed to ensure that not only are academic goals set by the province and the district reflected in them, but also the overall development of students, and the particular situations and goals of each school site.

School Councils and Parent Involvement

The involvement of parents in both formal school governance and in other ways in the schools was an important but generally underdeveloped facet of school-based management processes in the district. It was also concluded that district leaders, school leaders, and parents were often uncertain of the nature, expectations, and potential of parents to contribute to the development of school-based management practices.

Recommendation #5. That school-based management policies and procedures be reviewed to ensure that they clearly reflect appropriate roles and responsibilities of school councils and parents in the ongoing development of school-based management, and that effective means of giving carriage to such roles and responsibilities be developed in the context of the district as a whole, as well as in the context of specific school sites.

Recommendations for Research

Indications arose clearly in the study of several potentially fruitful avenues for further research in the district in respect of the ongoing implementation and development of school-based management.

Long-term Research

The perceptions examined in the study were limited at times by the relatively brief period of implementation of school-based management in the district, a fact reflected in a number of perceptions, findings, and conclusions. Clearly, longitudinal studies, or studies undertaken after a number of years have passed, should yield clearer perceptions and outcomes, and facilitate less tentative findings and conclusions than some reached in this study. Care would need to be taken in such studies to ensure that as school-based management changes became reified in the district and schools, consideration is given to perspectives of relativities between school-based management and non-school-based management environments.

Recommendation #6. That further research undertaken in the district be cognizant of the need and influence of a longer period of implementation, to be better able to further explore developments and perceptions about the phenomenon.

Governance Style

The conclusion reached in the study of perceptions of weak or non-existent linkages between school-based management and student achievement in the district, despite the prevalence of assumptions in the literature about their existence, indicated that there is much to understand about linkages between educational governance and educational outcomes. There is a need for a sound and appropriate conceptual basis about such relationships, rather than continuing with the existing situation where assumptions are frequently made about relationships, with little or no basis in researched understandings. The concept of school-based management, for example, may or may not be flawed, but this cannot be assumed because of the findings of this and other studies. Further, there may be unanticipated outcomes of changes in governance styles which need to be known and understood.

Recommendation #7. That there is a need for further detailed research which examines the relationships between school-based management, as a form of governance, and educational outcomes.

School Staffs and Parents

School-based management is a process which, theoretically, moves principals from the apex of school decision-making to the center of a web of decision-forming and decision-making relationships involving all with a stake in school decisions. Conclusions reached in the study concerning emerging changes in leadership patterns, heightened accountability to parents, and the influence of school councils suggest that stakeholders such as staff and parents form potentially valuable data sources. Hence, an understanding of the influence of school-based management processes in the district requires that the perceptions of parents and school staff be considered also.

Recommendation #8. That the perceptions of school staff and parents about the relationships between school-based management and educational outcomes be the subject of research in order to provide a broader understanding of the influence of the phenomenon in the district.

Personal Reflections

It has been a fascinating and challenging experience to trace the development of school-based management in Snowfields School District, and to attempt to understand facets of the school-based management experiences of the district's principals and district office personnel. My personal experiences as a school leader in a devolved education system where the change, by and large, occurred more gradually, were personally and professionally liberating and uplifting. The principals and district administrators of Snowfields School District did not have the luxury of a great deal of time to prepare for school-based management and other significant changes bearing down on them. The stage of development of school-based management detailed in the study indicates how effectively the challenges are generally being met in the district.

In my view, the district and its schools have made a brave and genuine attempt to implement school-based management in ways that provide opportunities for the phenomenon to have significant influence on and in schools, their staffs, and their clients, rather than adopting a minimalist approach to an externally imposed political imperative. The change has not been without its difficulties and struggles, and the new form of governance in the district is still being shaped through experience and knowledge. It will also undoubtedly be reformed and reshaped in the future as experience grows and other change influences occur.

A convincing perspective about the efficacy of school-based management is that neither principals nor district administrators wish to return to a centralized form of governance. Some arguments could be made for the recentralization of some aspects of some operations on the grounds of efficiency, cost effectiveness, and maintaining a focus on the teaching and learning tasks of schools. I believe that this can be done without any loss of decision-making authority or control by schools. Should this eventuate, it will occur, in all probability, somewhere beyond the stages of the triphasic implementation model, as schools become confident in the new style of governance, and as they and the school district move along the maturity continuum noted by the district's superintendent.

The challenge for principals and schools in the new governance era is to ensure that the power and control that they now have is best used to shape the schools in ways that are truly reflective and supportive of each school community's aspirations for its children. The challenge for school district administrators is to support schools in their endeavors, and to ensure that, as individual school identities grow, the benefits that flow from being part of a school system such as mutual support, sharing, and cross fertilization, are not lost.

Rosenholtz (1991) understood that initiatives such as school-based management foster "a professional, egalitarian culture whose visible hands nourish highly qualified teachers with technical growth, with optimism about change, with spirited inventiveness, and with growing liberty from classroom failure" (p. 215). The school-based management developments in Snowfields School District are a promising beginning to developing such an important culture. However, the study has also shown that there is still much to be done for such a desirable culture to be attained in reality.

Summary

In this concluding chapter of the dissertation, the study has been summarized, including its purpose, justification, and genesis. The general and specific research questions have been restated, and the review of the relevant literature has been revisited briefly. The study's research design, data collection, and data analysis procedures were reviewed, as was the manner of conduct of the research. The findings drawn from the data analysis were restated, and conclusions drawn from these findings were presented and discussed. The study adopted the perspective that perceptions of the influence of school-based management on school program quality and student achievement must be considered in the context of perceptions about policy and implementational contexts, and this approach is reflected in the findings and conclusions. It has been shown in the study that a very diverse and complex range of perceptions were held by principals and school district administrators about relationships between school-based management, school program quality and student achievement. The factors influencing perceptions were also very diverse and complex. Principals and school district administrators perceived that relationships existed between school-based management and the quality of school programs, with such perceptions influenced by the impact of the phenomenon on a range of program quality indicators. However, little evidence emerged of perceptions being held about relationships between school-based management and student achievement, with the key factor influencing this perception being that a direct causal relationship is not perceived to exist. The latter outcome casts some doubt, in the context of the research site, on the extensive claims in the literature of such a relationship. Recommendations for practice and for further research, also in the context of the school district, were offered. The chapter, and the study, concluded with some brief personal reflections by the researcher about school-based management and some aspects of the phenomenon in Snowfields School District.

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APPENDIX A

PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT, PROGRAM QUALITY AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

SURVEY OF PRINCIPALS IN AN ALBERTA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Michael B. Myers
Department of Educational Policy Studies
University of Alberta

Phone: 438-4637 (Home)

1996

Dear Colleague,

Your commitment to responding to this survey in a prompt and accurate manner is very much appreciated. Upon completion, please place the survey in the stamped, addressed envelope provided, and mail it at your earliest convenience.

Thank you.

Code: _______

A. CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

This section seeks brief background information about yourself and your school which will assist in the analysis of the survey data.

Office use only

1. Please check (✓) your school category.

☐ K-6

☐ K-9

☐ K-12

☐ 7-9

☐ 10-12

2. How many years have you served as principal of the school? (Count the current year as a full year.)

_____ years

3. How many years in total have you served as a principal? (Count the current year as a full year.)

_____ years

4. If you have served in an executive position in a school district office (e.g., superintendent, assistant superintendent, curriculum adviser), please indicate the nature of the position/s and the number of years in the position/s.

Positions/s: ____________________ Year/s: ____________

____________________ Year/s: ____________

5. What is the current enrollment at your school?

____

6. How many teaching staff are employed at your school?

_________ FTE

7. How many support staff are employed at your school?

_________ FTE

Code: ________

Office use only

8. Does your school currently have a school council?

Check:

☐ Yes or ☐ No → Please proceed to Q. 10.

9. If you checked "Yes" for Q. 8, please indicate briefly the types of key responsibilities the council carries (e.g., oversight of school budget).

10. Please comment as to why your school does not have a council.

Code: ______

Please indicate your responses to Questions 11 and 12 by selecting from the scale below the number of the descriptor that best applies. For example, if your response is best described as Highly Knowledgeable, place the number 1 on the line beside the question.

Office use only

1	2	3	4	5
Highly knowledgeable	Very knowledgeable	Moderately knowledgeable	Slightly knowledgeable	None

11. What was your level of knowledge about school-based management before you became aware that it was to be implemented in the district? ______

1	2	3	4	5
Highly experienced	Very experienced	Moderately experienced	Slightly experienced	None

12. What was your level of experience with school-based management before you became aware that it was to be implemented in the district? ______

Please turn to next page.

Code: ______

B. KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE WITH SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT

This section seeks information about your knowledge, experiences, and perceptions of the implementation of school-based management.

Please indicate your response in this and the following sections by selecting from the scale below the number of the descriptor that best applies in your case for each statement. For example, If you consider that your response is best described as Disagree, place the number 4 on the line beside the statement.

Office use only

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

13. Principals were consulted by the district in the decision to implement school-based management in the district. ______

14. Principals were involved with preparing district school-based management implementation policies. ______

15. Training programs about school-based management were provided for principals by the district prior to the implementation of school-based management. ______

16. I perceived these training programs as necessary. ______

17. I perceived these training programs as effective. ______

18. These training programs included the following (please provide a response in each category):

    18a. organizational management ______

    18b. technical skills (e.g., budgeting) ______

    18c. long- and short-range planning ______

    18d. negotiating skills ______

    18e. shared leadership skills ______

    18f. small-group dynamics ______

    18g. human-resource management ______

    18h. communications ______

    18i. management of change ______

Code: ______

Office use only

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

19. I understood the district goals in introducing school-based management. ______

20. The implementation process took into consideration the specific situation of my school. ______

21. The pace of implementation was attuned to the specific situation of my school. ______

22. Prior to implementation, I felt anxiety or confusion about school-based management. ______

23. There was mistrust of the motives for introducing school-based management. ______

24. There was resistance to the implementation of school-based management from (please provide a response in each category):

    24a. the board ______

    24b. district office personnel ______

    24c. principals of other schools ______

    24d. teachers in this school ______

    24e. parents in this school ______

    24f. teachers' association ______

25. There is resistance towards parent involvement in the management of schools in the district. ______

26. *Prior* to implementation, my perceptions of school-based management were positive. ______

Code: ________

Office use only

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

27. Please comment on your response to Question 26.

28. *After* implementation, my perceptions were positive. ______

29. Please comment on your response to Question 28.

30. Please add any additional comments you wish about matters raised in this section.

Please turn to next page.

Code: ________

C. IMPACT OF SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT ON THE SCHOOL

This section seeks your perceptions of the overall impact of school-based management on your school.

1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Office use only

31. The school has attained greater autonomy and flexibility because of school-based management. _____

32. Under school-based management, the school has authority for decision making in the following areas (please provide a response in each category).

    32a. allocation of school finances _____

    32b. staffing (e.g., the appointment of teachers and support staff) _____

    32c. curriculum _____

    32d. school programs _____

33. Under school-based management, the school has been better able to take initiatives at the local level. _____

34. Under school-based management, the school has been constrained by one or more of the following sources (please provide a response in each category):

    34a. the district board _____

    34b. teachers' association _____

    34c. community groups _____

    34d. the province _____

    34e. federal government _____

35. The district office has adopted a support rather than a supervisory role for principals and schools under school-based management. _____

36. The district office provides material and moral support for initiatives emanating from the school. _____

Code: ______

Office use only

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

37. The district office readily provides information needed by the school in decision making. ______

38. Under school-based management, principals are able to influence district policies that affect schools. ______

39. My style of leadership has changed under school-based management. ______

40. My leadership role has become more complex under school-based management. ______

41. Under school-based management, leadership is a shared responsibility in the school. ______

42. School-based management has engendered changes in the traditional patterns of decision making in the school. ______

43. Leadership by teachers in the school has been enhanced by school-based management. ______

44. The school is making better quality decisions under school-based management. ______

45. Changes in school leadership patterns have led to increased job satisfaction for (please provide a response in each category):

    45a. the principal ______

    45b. teachers ______

    45c. support staff ______

46. Under school-based management, the following have occurred or are occurring in the school (please provide a response in each category):

    46a. better school climate ______

    46b. higher levels of trust among all staff ______

    46c. heightened sense of shared mission for the school ______

    46d. better communications ______

    46e. shared decision making ______

Code: ________

1	2	3	4	5	Office use only
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	

46f. enhanced collaborative work practices ______

46g. clearer understanding of roles ______

46h. shared responsibility for effective discipline ______

46i. heightened staff creativity and innovation ______

46j. increased staff morale ______

46k. increased staff loyalty ______

46l. increased workload for staff ______

46m. increased workload for the principal ______

46n. increased time constraints ______

47. Under school-based management, the school has greater levels of accountability to the district office. ______

48. Under school-based management, the school has greater levels of accountability to parents. ______

49. Please add any additional comments you wish about matters raised in this section.

Please turn to next page.

Code: ________

D. SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT AND SCHOOL PROGRAM QUALITY

This section seeks information about your perceptions of relationships between school-based management and the quality of the educational programs at your school.

Office use only

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

50. School-based management has contributed to enhancing the overall quality of the school's educational program. ____

51. School-based management has contributed to the following at the school (please provide a response in each category):

51a. increased curriculum flexibility ____

51b. a relocation of curriculum decision making from the district office to the school ____

51c. better resource management ____

51d. development of school-level instructional policy ____

51e. enhanced school ability to respond to individual differences ____

51f. enhanced access to specialized resources and staff within the school and/or from external sources ____

51g. the development of new instructional programs in the school ____

51h. selection of better text and supplemental instructional materials ____

51i. closer relationships with parents ____

52. School-based management has contributed to enhanced collaborative, collegial program planning in the school. ____

53. School-based management has led to increased accountability by the school to the district office for the quality of the school's programs. ____

Code: ______

Office use only

1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree

54. School-based management has led to the school's developing its own performance indicators of the quality of the school's programs. ______

55. School-based management has created difficulties because of the demands of teaching and increased demands of other commitments. ______

56. School-based management has led to enhanced professional-development programs in the school. ______

57. Please add any additional comments you wish about matters raised in this section.

Please turn to next page.

Code: ______

E. SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

This section seeks information about your perceptions about relationships between school-based management as implemented in your school and the achievement of students.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Office use only

58. School-based management has contributed to the overall academic growth of students. ______

59. School-based management is enhancing what is occurring in teaching and learning processes. ______

60. Under school-based management, the following changes are occurring in the school's teaching and learning roles (please provide a response in each category):

    60a. increased focus on basic-skills acquisition ______

    60b. increased levels of teacher responsibility for instructional and classroom-management decisions ______

    60c. increased levels of teacher responsibility for student performance ______

    60d. increased levels of parent responsibility for student performance ______

    60e. heightened expectations of student achievement ______

    60f. enhanced instructional leadership by teachers ______

    60g. impact on meeting needs of students in categories such as special education or academic challenge ______

    60h. a diversion of teacher time from teaching and learning functions to meetings, etc. ______

Code: ______

Office use only

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

61. School-based management has affected the principal's instructional leadership roles in the following ways (please provide a response in each category):

61a. encouraging the setting and monitoring of school-wide academic standards ______

61b. increasing authority and control over class size and class composition ______

61c. enhancing the supervision of teachers ______

61d. enhancing processes used in the evaluation of teachers ______

61e. enhancing the selection of teachers ______

61f. permitting more appropriate balancing of specific program objectives with overall school goals ______

61g. heightening teacher awareness of curriculum content ______

61h. heightening parent awareness of curriculum content ______

62. Please add any additional comments you wish about matters raised in this section.

Please turn to next page.

Code: _______

F. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Please add any comments you wish to make about relationships between school-based management, the quality of school programs, and student achievement.

Thank you for your cooperation and for the time and effort you have committed to completing this survey.

PLEASE PLACE THE COMPLETED SURVEY IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED AND MAIL IT AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE.

APPENDIX B

PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT, PROGRAM QUALITY AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

INTERVIEW GUIDES

- **Principals**
- **Superintendent**
- **Associate Superintendents**

Michael B. Myers

Department of Educational Policy Studies
University of Alberta

1996

INTERVIEW GUIDES

INTRODUCTION (General for all respondents)

This section will be used to establish rapport with respondents and to set the scene for the interview processes. The section will broadly encompass the following:

- Interviewer's background
- Respondent's background
- Some comparisons of education systems
- The purposes of the interview
- The semistructured nature of the interview
- Review arrangements for the conduct of the interview, including the use of audio recording
- Confirm confidentiality arrangements
- Confirm follow-up arrangements, for example, providing a copy of the transcript for contents verification to the respondent, and arrangements for the provision of study outcomes.

PRINCIPALS

P1: Tell me about your background as a principal.

Probes:

- *How long have you been a principal?*
- *How long have you served in your present position?*

P2: Do you have any general comments to make about the survey or any matters raised in it?

Probes:

- *What do you think about school-based management generally?*
- *Is there any particular point you wish to pursue further?*
- *Did you have any difficulty in completing the survey?*

P3: Did you choose either of the extremes on the scale for any of the questions? Do you wish to comment further on this?

Probes:

- *Why do you feel strongly about that?*
- *Do you have any examples that you could share?*

P4: What are your perceptions of the nature and purpose of school-based management?

P5: Describe your role in the introduction of school-based management in the District.

Probes:

- *Did you have a role beyond your school?*
- *Did you feel that you were consulted by the District Office?*

P6: Describe your role in the introduction of school-based management in your school.

Probes:

- *What challenges and obstacles did you face?*
- *Did you perceive that there was resistance to the implementation?*
- *What presented little or no difficulty for you in the introduction?*
- *What goal-setting procedures were used?*
- *What perceptions do you have of the relationships between goals and budgets?*

P7: Describe your perceptions of school-based management prior to its introduction.

Probes:

- *Why did you hold these perceptions?*

P8: Have your perceptions of school-based management changed since its introduction?

Probes:

- *In what ways have your perceptions changed?*
- *What has influenced you to change your perceptions?*

P9: Do you perceive that the implementation of school-based management in your school is complete?

Probes:

- *Do you see school-based management implementation as an ongoing process?*
- *Do you see possibilities for implementation beyond what is currently District policy?*

P10: In your experience, have there been positive influences by school-based management on your school's programs?

Probes:

- *Could you provide some examples?*
- *In what ways do you consider that programs have been enhanced?*
- *Why do you attribute such influences to school-based management?*

P11: In your experience, have there been negative influences by school-based management on your school's programs?

Probes:

- *Could you provide some examples?*
- *In what ways do you consider that programs have been affected?*
- *Why do you attribute such influences to school-based management?*

P12: In your experience, has school-based management had any influence on student achievement levels in your school?

Probes:

- *Why do you have such perceptions?*
- *Why do you attribute such influence to school-based management?*
- *Can you give some examples?*

P13: Would you like your school or the District to revert to a non-school-based management environment?

Probes:

- *Why/Why not?*

SUPERINTENDENT/ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENTS

S/AS1: Tell me about your background as a superintendent/associate superintendent and as a principal.

Probes:

- *How long have you been in your present position?*
- *Was any of your principalship position gained in a school-based management environment?*

S/AS2: Describe your role in the introduction of school-based management in the District.

Probes:

- *What were the motivating forces behind the introduction?*
- *What facilitated the introduction?*
- *What inhibited the introduction?*
- *What was the Board's involvement?*
- *Were principals involved in the decision to implement and in the implementational processes?*
- *Were other stakeholders, for example, parents, involved? Why/why not?*

S/AS3: How do you perceive the District Office as operating in a school-based management environment?

Probes:

- *Does the District Office demonstrate and promote school-based management and decision making?*
- *Is the District Office promoting the creation of new roles in schools and in the District Office?*
- *Is the District Office delegating authority to schools to create new or different learning environments?*
- *Is the District Office communicating appropriate information to schools to facilitate school-based management? How?*
- *Does the District Office encourage risk taking and experimentation in schools? How? Why?*
- *Does the District Office encourage principals to involve teachers and other stakeholders in school-based management? How? Why?*
- *Does the District Office encourage and facilitate school-level professional development? How?*
- *Has the District Office been able to build alliances with unions to facilitate school-based management? Why? How?*
- *Has the District Office been able to provide resources for schools to facilitate school-based management, for example, time for staff to assume new roles and responsibilities?*

S/AS4: Describe your perceptions of school-based management prior to its introduction.

Probes:

- *Why did you hold these perceptions?*

S/AS5: Have your perceptions of school-based management changed since its introduction?

Probes:

- *In what ways have your perceptions changed?*
- *What has influenced you to change your perceptions?*

S/AS6: Do you perceive that the implementation of school-based management in the District is complete?

Probes:

- *Do you see school-based management implementation as an ongoing process?*
- *Do you see possibilities for implementation beyond what is currently District policy?*

S/AS7: In your experience, have there been positive impacts by school-based management on the programs of the schools in the District?

Probes:

- *In what ways do you consider that programs have been enhanced?*
- *Could you provide some examples?*
- *Why do attribute such impact to school-based management?*

S/AS8: In your experience, have there been negative impacts by school-based management on the programs of schools in the District?

Probes:

- *Could you provide some examples?*
- *In what ways do you consider that programs have been affected?*
- *Why do attribute such impact to school-based management?*

S/AS9: In your experience, has school-based management had any impact on student achievement levels in schools in the District?

Probes:

- *Why do you have such perceptions?*
- *Why do you attribute such impacts to school-based management?*
- *Can you give some examples?*

S/AS10: Would you like the District to revert to a non-school-based management environment?

Probes:

- *Why/Why not?*

APPENDIX C

CORRESPONDENCE

- **C1:** ***Pilot of Questionnaire Survey Instrument***
- **C2:** ***Initial Letter to Principals***
- **C3:** ***Follow-Up Letter to Principals***

University of Alberta
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Educational Administration, Educational Foundations, Adult and Higher Education
Faculty of Education

Canada T6G 2G5

7-104 Education Building North,
Telephone (403) 492-7625
Fax (403) 492-2024

Dear Colleague

PILOTING OF SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Thankyou for agreeing to participate in the piloting of the attached survey.

Could I ask that you do the following:

1. Complete the survey at your earliest convenience.

2. Note the time taken to complete the survey and record that time on the attached response sheet.

3. Make any comments you wish about the survey instrument on the response sheet. I am particularly interested in your responses to the structure and layout of the survey, the clarity of language used, and any suggestions or thoughts that you may have about content areas in respect of school-based management.

4. Return the pilot survey to me:

- if you are a member of the Department of Educational Policy Studies, would you leave it in my mailbox in the mailroom,

- for other respondents, I will make arrangements to collect it from you.

Again, my sincere appreciation for your willingness to assist my research in this way.

Michael B. Myers

October, 1996

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granted by
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Policy Studies to
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PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT, PROGRAM QUALITY AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

SURVEY PILOT

RESPONSE SHEET

1. TIME TAKEN TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY: __________

2. STRUCTURE AND LAYOUT OF THE SURVEY:

3. CLARITY OF LANGUAGE:

4. CONTENT:

5. OTHER COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS:

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1803 Galbraith House
Michener Park
EDMONTON
ALBERTA
T6H 5B5

«title»«first name»«last name»
«position»
«school»
«street»
«town»

Dear «first name»

Further to our recent telephone discussion, I have pleasure in enclosing the survey which you have kindly agreed to complete.

As I mentioned to you, I am an experienced principal from Australia undertaking a doctoral program in educational administration at the University of Alberta as an A.W. Reeves Scholar. My doctoral research is the area of school-based management, and I am utilizing (School District) as a case study in the research. The survey seeks your perceptions of relationships between school-based management, the quality of school programs and student achievement, in the context of the implementation of school-based management in the district, and in your school. All items in the survey, with the exception of the contextual information, have been extracted from the extensive literature on school-based management, and represent a distillation of claims made in the literature of activities and influences which may emanate from the implementation of school-based management.

The District Superintendent, (name), has given both his approval and his support for this research to be undertaken. Your participation is, of course, voluntary. However, I do ask that you give of your time, knowledge, and experience to support the research, and for that you have my sincere appreciation. The survey has been designed to facilitate completion as efficiently as possible. Space has been provided for additional comments, but if it is insufficient, please feel free to annotate or add pages as you wish, in order to ensure that your views are expressed to your satisfaction.

The confidentiality of your responses is guaranteed. Individual schools, principals, and the school district will not be identifiable in the study's outcomes. Data contained in the study report will not be attributable to any source, other than in aggregated form relating to the district or principals as a whole. The survey has been coded, as you may have noticed. This code is known only to me and will not be revealed to any other person. A code is necessary for the administration of the survey and to locate responses in categories for comparative purposes.

A copy of the study's findings will be provided to each respondent in due course, and a copy of the dissertation will be provided to the district's central office upon completion.

Should you have any inquiries, I have provided my home phone number on the survey. Additionally, the Chair of my doctoral supervisory committee, Professor Ken Ward, may be contacted at the University on 492-4905.

Please place the completed survey in the stamped, addressed envelope provided and mail it at your earliest convenience.

I am only too conscious that you have many demands on your time. I appreciate very much your willingness to complete the survey. Thankyou.

Yours sincerely

Michael B. Myers

09 December, 1996

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Michener Park
EDMONTON
ALBERTA
T6H 5B5

«title»«first name»«last name»
«position»
«school»
«street»
«town»

Dear «first name»

You will recall that, during the recent winter months, you assisted me with my doctoral research program in which I was examining the perceptions of principals and district administrators about relationships between school-based management as implemented in (School District), the quality of school programs and student achievement.

May I again express my deep appreciation for the time and effort you gave to support the research program. The research could not have been carried out without the generous help given by yourself, and your colleagues in other schools and the (School District) central office.

My time in the jurisdiction, and my interactions with people such as yourself, have given me some insights into the professional ethos of (School District), and I have been very impressed by the levels of professionalism, enthusiasm, and commitment which I was privileged to see wherever I went. I have also gleaned many ideas which will assist me in my work in Australia.

In keeping with the commitment I made, I am enclosing a copy of the study's final chapter. In the chapter, the study is summarized, including the findings made, and my conclusions and recommendations are presented. The findings and conclusions were derived from my analysis of the extensive data which were gathered from the survey of principals, interviews with principals and district office administrators, and from documents. The chapter is in draft form as I have yet to defend the dissertation. Should you wish to discuss any matter in the draft chapter, I can be best contacted on my home phone number, 438-4637. I would be very interested in your responses.

Once the dissertation has been accepted, a bound copy will be lodged with the superintendent's office, should you wish to peruse the complete document.

Again, I express my sincere appreciation for your support and interest, and I wish you continued success in your leadership endeavors.

Yours sincerely,

Michael B. Myers

April, 1997